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Yolo 4 SMUD kicks off one powerful campaign

By Beth Curda/Enterprise staff writer

It was music, margaritas and mingling for dozens of people who gathered in Sunday's heat at a South Davis home. Despite the afternoon's festive atmosphere, the group soon will take on a more serious tone.

Elected officials and others from the community gathered Sunday to kick off the yes on SMUD campaign they will undertake until November's vote on the proposed switch in electricity providers for parts of Yolo County.

The group, Yolo 4 SMUD, is rallying in support of the proposed annexation of Davis, Woodland, West Sacramento and the rural areas that connect the cities by the Sacramento Municipal Utility District, the public power provider for Sacramento County and a small part of Placer County.

If successful on ballots in Yolo, Sacramento and Placer counties, SMUD would become the electricity provider for around 70,000 customers of Pacific Gas & Electric Co. and acquire the private utility's equipment and land in the annexed areas.

PG&E is a strong opponent of the move, and the annexation likely would involve a court battle over the costs associated with it.

Two members of the SMUD board of directors, President Genevieve Shiroma and director Bill Slaton, were at Sunday's kick-off event.

"This is very important not only for everyone in Yolo, but this is very important (also) for everyone who already are SMUD customers," Slaton told the group, which plans to raise money, sponsor forums, assemble at the Davis Farmers' Market and walk precincts, as part of what organizers said will be a typical Davis grassroots campaign.

Slaton said the battle will be challenging, because PG&E will do everything it can to try to stop the Yolo group.

"We're going to need a 'yes' vote on both sides of the river," he said, encouraging people to donate to the cause. "We want you as our customers because we think you're great and you will make SMUD even stronger."

Also present Sunday were Elly Fairclough representing Congressman Mike Thompson, Assemblywoman Lois Wolk, Yolo County Supervisor Mariko Yamada, Davis Mayor Ruth Asmundson and City Councilmen Don Saylor and Stephen Souza, Councilman-elect Lamar Heystek and Davis Board of Education trustee Jim Provenza.

"For far too long, we have allowed a corporate entity to subject us to high prices (for) power with no public input," said Souza, who manned the margarita blender during the event. "And it's time for us to take the power back and give it to the people."

Yamada said she expects PG&E to outspend the Yolo 4 SMUD campaign "probably 20-to-1."

But, she said, "I think the voters will cast their ballots based on fact, not fear. ... Big money does not work on this side of the river."

The campaign will not be easy, Wolk said, warning the group of a crowded ballot in November. The state is putting its bond package on the ballot, and the gubernatorial race and other state- and local-level candidates and issues will face voters.

"We have to be noisy, clear, focused, because we have good policy on our side," Wolk said. The former Davis mayor and county supervisor contributed \$1,000 to the campaign.

Weather
Poll

ads here



Our history

Publicity handbook Mayor Asmundson matched her donation.

LOCAL LINKS

Bill Julian, who hosted the event in his back yard on Almond Lane, said SMUD is cheaper, greener in its approach, more reliable and locally controlled.

Heystek said the key to success will be to involve people "who don't otherwise feel that they have a stake" in local issues, such as younger voters and renters.

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