



June 8, 2017

Dear Customers,

On behalf of the San Lorenzo Valley Water District, I would like to respond to an inaccurate, irresponsible headline and story published this week by the *Press Banner* newspaper, titled "Water district restricts public comment, violates Brown Act."

The Press Banner did not send a reporter or editor to attend the May 25 Board meeting that is the subject of the article. The Press Banner also did not contact the District to check the newspaper's understanding of "facts" regarding public comment at the May 25 board meeting. Having not attended the meeting or contacted the District to check "facts" may have contributed to the Press Banner's article being wrong on three very important points that are presented as central elements in the article:

1) False/untrue: Press Banner statement that Board President Ratcliffe suspended "any public comment on agenda items until the end of the meeting..."

In fact, time for public comment was recognized on all action items on the agenda. Comments were made by members of the public a total of 18 times on agenda items during the meeting and prior to votes taken by the Board. In order to more quickly make progress on critical items that were on the agenda, the Board voted unanimously to move public comments on items not on the agenda to end of the meeting, at which point two members of the public took the opportunity to address the Board regarding items not on the agenda.

2) False/untrue: Press Banner statement that "Ratcliffe initiated a move to change published policy of pulling any item from the so-called consent agenda for public and/or board comment if any director or member of the public requests it."

In fact, Director Bruce pulled two items from the consent agenda and Chair Ratcliffe sought public comment on those two items, though no one from the public chose to speak.

3) False/untrue: Press Banner statement that the "directors took no vote to accept the consent agenda..."

In fact, the Board *did* vote on the consent agenda and it was approved unanimously. The Press Banner also highlighted the Board not approving "payment of the bills," which is a reference to the "bill list." The bill list is included in regular staff reports, which are not voted on by the board, a common practice followed by other water districts.

The Press Banner's judgment that the District has violated the Brown Act demonstrates bias and serves to erode public trust, which is of great concern. Unfortunately, the Press Banner does not have a publisher or an ombudsman for readers or public agencies to engage with on issues of concern. We encourage the Press Banner to redouble its efforts to report news accurately and without bias.

The San Lorenzo Valley Water District is fully committed to transparency, public engagement and good governance. We take our responsibility seriously and have been recognized with the

District Transparency Certificate of Excellence from the Special District Leadership Foundation of California for 2016-2018.

If you have any questions about our commitment to upholding the Brown Act and supporting public comment, please contact me at blee@slwd.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" and last name "Lee" clearly distinguishable.

Brian Lee
District Manager