



Exclusive: Hews Media Group-Community News

SPEAKER JOHN PEREZ IMPLICATED IN CENTRAL BASIN WATER SCHEME

“Here's the deal, we need to be proactive, if we are not, if we do not put a plan together that we can all support, the Mutuels (Maywood Water) can be dissolved with a stroke of the pen, it can be done.”

Tom Calderon, July 2010 meeting with Maywood Water District Officials.

By Brian Hews and
Randy Economy

(Maywood, CA) Hews Media Group – Community News has obtained an audiotape that details how the Office of California State Assembly Speaker John Perez collaborated with former Assemblyman Tom Calderon and officials with the Central Basin Municipal Water District in an attempt to coerce three Maywood Mutual Water Districts (MMWD) into taking on unwanted projects that if they did not accept, the districts, as Calderon said, would be “dissolved with a stroke of a pen.”

The “stroke of a pen” meaning legislation that would be championed by Speaker Perez and passed in Sacramento to “dissolve the water companies.”

The entities would then be taken over by CBMWD.

Even more disturbing, the projects would have landed Calderon, and his allies, as well as the CBMWD a lucrative \$25 million dollar consulting contract to “fix problems” that one MMWD General Manager insisted twice in the audio recording “we don’t have, or we were already working with the WRD to fix.”

Further, HMG-CN has determined that several figures currently under probe by the FBI in a complex political “pay to play

scheme” at the CBMWD also played active roles in pushing for the legislation that targeted the tiny MMWD.

HMG-CN has also been told by sources that investigators with the FBI have been given a copy of the audio tape.

It was back on June 7, 2010 when Calderon is heard on the audio recording saying “summed” by Speaker Perez and the Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa to call the meeting that

included Enrique Gasca, one of Perez’s top staff lieutenants, CBMWD General Manager Art Aguiar, Sergio Palos, General Manager of MMWD #1, Gustavo Villa, GM of MMWD #2, and Bob Ruhl, who is the GM in District #3.

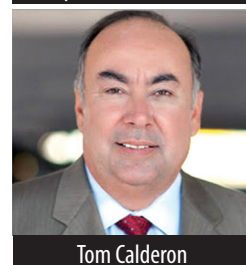
Villaraigosa and Perez are cousins and are considered to be close political allies.

Two parties who attended the meeting recorded the conversations. HMG-CN was provided a copy of the recording two weeks ago. HMG-CN was also told by sources that the Los Angeles Times was given a copy of the same audio recording but ‘refused’ to print the contents of the meeting.

At the time, records show that Calderon was being paid \$11,000
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Speaker John Perez



Tom Calderon

ART AGUIAR
GENERAL MANAGER
CBMWD GM Art Aguiar

Campaign '13: Downey School Board Incumbent Sodehani Runs Hard in Reelection Bid

By Tammye McDuff

Martha E. Sodehani is an incumbent member of and candidate for the Trustee Area 1 seat on the Downey Unified School District Board of Trustees. She is up for general election on November 5, 2013. Area 5 lies north of Firestone Boulevard down to Gardendale Street. Ms. Swenson will run against 23-year Downey resident and electrician John Anagnostou. She has been unopposed for the Trustee Area 1 seat on the Downey Unified School District Board of Education up until now.

Martha is a trainer for foster parenting, primary care-givers, self-esteem, and discipline,

called Partnering for Safety and Permanence-Model Approaches to Partnerships in Parenting [PS-MAPP]. For 20 years Ms. Sodehani has provided mandated training for foster parents within Los Angeles County. The program provides training to all DCFS Foster parents & Prospective Adoptive/Foster parents. Sodehani also serves as a curriculum adviser for Cerritos College and Long Beach City College.

With six children of biological and adoptive means, Ms. Sodehani has been actively involved in PTA. Martha has received the PTA’s highest honor, the Golden Oak Award. Other awards for volunteer work in the community include Certificates of Ap-

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Campaign '13: Swenson Stresses Experience in Downey School Board Reelection Effort

By Tammye McDuff

Nancy Swenson is seeking re-election to the Downey Unified School Board representing District / Area 5 and is heading into the final stretch of campaigning for the upcoming election that will be held on Tuesday, November 5.

Swenson has been a board member for eight years, a Downey resident for 40 years and one of ten family members graduating from Downey Unified School District. This will be her third term to run, being opposed by John Anagnostou.

Swenson is a member of the Assistance League of the Downey Gypsy Johnson Auxiliary where she currently holds the position of Chairman. She is

also an active member in Gangs Out of Downey (G.O.O.D.) and The Downey Symphony Guild. While on the School Board, Nancy has been a member of both the Budget and Audit committees where she endorsed policies that contained costs. She is a member of the Character Counts Coalition, the Technology Planning Team and is the School Board representative on the Common Core Transition Team.

An alumnus of Raytheon’s Space and Airborne Systems (SAS) division, where Nancy supervised a team responsible for ordering and tracking a multi-million dollar budget, has given her more than adequate experience in financial planning for

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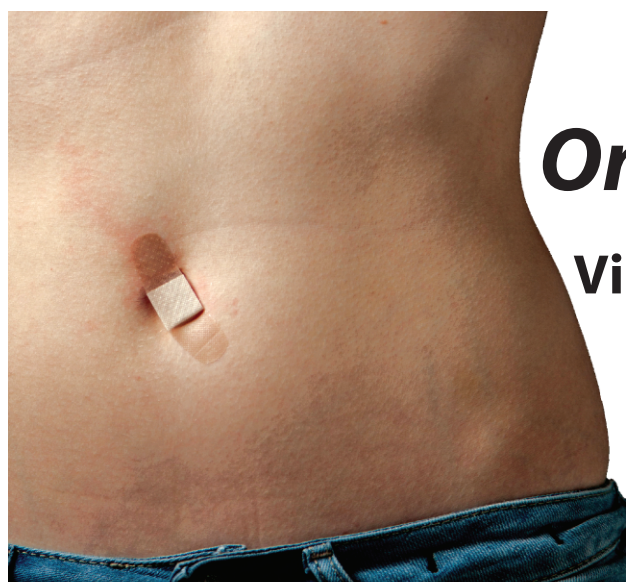
Downey PD Wants Your ‘Unused Prescription Drugs’

By Tammye McDuff

The Downey Police Department and community volunteers, in cooperation with The National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day will be collecting unused, unwanted or out-of-date prescription medications this Saturday, October 26th from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

The collection event will take place at the West Lot of the Downey Police Department, 10911 Brookshire Ave. The event is co-sponsored by the Los Angeles Division of the Drug Enforcement Agency (D.E.A.). The D.E.A. is providing the collec-

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SCHEME
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per month by CBMWD for ‘public affairs’ earning, as reported by HMG-CN, more than \$750,000 in consulting fees with the besieged agency during a six year period.

Aguilar begins the meeting with an explanation of why they were “summoned” by Perez and Villaraigosa and then says to the MMWD GM’s, “anything can happen if the money is there.”

One of the MMWD GM’s later asked who Calderon was, with Calderon answering, “I was a State Assemblyman, my other brothers were Assemblymen too, so (laughing) we got the politics covered.”

Almost three minutes into the meeting, Enrique Gasca enters the room and is introduced as Speaker Perez’ Director by Calderon.

Calderon goes on to say, “if we can’t make this (the project) happen we are all in a lot of trouble, in terms of things you want from Sacramento and his (Speaker Perez) ability to retaliate or encourage things... I have never seen a Speaker who does not get what he wants.”

He goes on to say, “here’s the deal, we need to be proactive, if we are not, if we do not put a plan together we can all support, the MMWD’s can be dissolved with (Calderon snapping his fingers) a ‘stroke of the pen’, it can be done.”

One of the GM’s angrily says, “and this is your solution to better quality water?”

Calderon answers him, “it (the water quality) doesn’t matter, the (goal of the project) does not matter.”

The bill that Calderon was talking about was Assembly Bill 240, first carried by Perez after he became Speaker nearly three years ago and revived this year almost verbatim by Assemblyman Anthony

Rendon. Perez touted the bill as his “first legislative bill after his election.”

The bill was being pushed by Calderon too, and only targeted the MMWD.

Rendon carried the bill through the halls of Sacramento during his first ten months in office and touted the bill as being able to “address the water quality problems in the 63rd Assembly District.”

The bill, Rendon said in a press statement issued by his office this past week, now requires “mutual water companies like those that deliver water to Maywood’s residents

to comply with the Brown Act and the Public Records Act—two icons of public agency law.”

Rendon and Perez have been close personal friends and allies for several years.

High-ranking officials in Sacramento tell HMG-CN

that Rendon now has the “personal backing and support” of Perez to be the next Speaker of the California State Assembly. Perez is termed out of office in 2014 and is in the process of running for state wide office.

Perez and Tom Calderon have also been strong allies for more than twenty years back before Calderon was elected to the State Assembly in the 1990’s and when Perez was working for a local labor union and working as a political activist in Los Angeles County.

The recording goes on and details how Calderon tells the group that “the quality of the water is not an issue, but painting a

perception that the water is bad is the intent and if the water is presented as being bad, then the money will be there.”

He goes on to say, “if we can do that, then that will make him (Speaker Perez) feel comfortable enough to go ahead and move forward (to disburse the \$25 million). He (Perez) will want to have an independent agency receive the disbursement-Calderon indicates that CBMWD as the agency-and would be the appropriate entity to control the process.”

Calderon also said that the data will



Enrique Gasca was at the time Speaker Perez’ Director.

Gasca said... “because whether this Council (Maywood City Council) is there or not, the state law (AB 240) and the Speaker (Perez) are still going to be there.”

have to be “proved-up by CBMWD and our (Calderon’s) engineers to justify getting money.”

Twenty minutes into the meeting one of the MMWD GM’s asks “what do you want us to do?” Calderon’s response was, “as long as it is agreeable to us (Calderon, Aguilar), I don’t think the Speaker (Perez) is going to care how it is done, as long as it is getting there.”

Aguilar then prompts the GM’s for a “needs list” and tells them that, “it is in the best interests of you and your owners to cooperate with us and Speaker Perez.”

In what was probably indicative of the entire meeting, one GM says to Aguilar, “so you want me to give you a list of things that I need to replace to solve a problem I don’t have.”

Aguilar’s response was a loud laugh

followed by “yeah.”

The meeting ended with all parties agreeing to submit the “plans” to Aguilar in one month, in as “non-technical format as possible, I am not dealing with technical people,” said Aguilar.

“With Rendon, Tom (Calderon) followed through on his threats,” one of the Maywood water executives who did not want to be specifically named due to possible retaliation and “safety concerns for his family” told the newspaper in a phone interview during the past month.

Rendon championed the bill this past year and touted its passage as “AB 240 makes \$1 million available from the state to help fund efforts to provide clean water to the residents of Maywood.”

“The residents of Maywood have had to drink, cook and bathe in dirty water for too long. AB 240 gives local residents the ability to monitor the companies that deliver their water and brings \$1 million into the district to make sure our residents get cleaner water,” Rendon stated.

One lawmaker in Sacramento, who did not want to be named publicly, told the newspaper that the bill “flew under the radar.”

“No one really paid much attention to it, since it was narrowly crafted,” the lawmaker continued.

“As far as I was concerned, it was a District bill that was important to Anthony. Now, I wish I would have known more about the background, since the Calderon criminal investigation is on everyone’s mind in Sacramento,” the same elected state legislator quipped.

Just hours before this article was published, Tom Calderon told the Sacramento Bee that he would not be a candidate for his brother Ron Calderon’s state senate seat.

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preciation, Volunteer of the Year Awards, and Woman of the Year nominations from the State Legislature, Los Angeles County, City of Downey, Assistance League, and the Downey City Library (where she chairs the Books on Wheels program). Honored as the Soroptimist Woman of the Year, Martha enjoys her active role in the Assistance League of Downey, the PTA HELPS food bank, and Downey Coordinating Council.

In her task as an advocate for children, she is a puppeteer in the Kids on the Block Program. She performs before youth audiences with presentations to strengthen students' resistance to gangs, drugs, and bullies. For over ten years, Martha has also been in skits encouraging Downey's students to join the Downey City Library's Summer Reading Program. Through Assistance League, she serves on the Operation School Bell Committee, a program that provides clothing and shoes to needy students in the District. She is also a member of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition and Gangs Out Of Downey (GOOD).

Ms. Sodehani truly believes that "There is nothing more rewarding than spending time in the pursuit of serving children." This has been evidenced in her calling over the years as a foster parent to medically fragile newborns, touching their lives one child at a time. She now feels privileged to be in a position to serve the District's 22,000 plus children.

Standing on many issues, the Anti-bullying policy is one that is closest to her heart.

The Downey Unified School District has updated its anti-bullying policy

to come into compliance with the Safe Place to Learn Act. This act requires that California school districts adopt policies that include words that protect bullying against perceived and actual "gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation." As of September 18, 2012, the Downey Unified School District is in compliance with the Safe Place to Learn Act. In compliance with this Martha states "What happens a lot of times with all the cuts is things fall through the cracks; there's no one to do it. In our case, I feel strongly about what we're doing to address bullying period."

SWENSON

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the DUSD. Unlike many school districts, Downey Unified avoided drastic cuts during the economic crisis.

Swenson told a reporter recently that, "The integrity of our solid core curriculum must be perpetuated. I will continue to support and reinforce English language development, special education, technology [of course], science and sports programs, to ensure that our students receive the educational tools and support so crucial to future success in college."

She also feels that the "safety and welfare of our students is a priority in all of my decisions." She also stands firm when it comes to students who engage in gangs and bullying. "Schools must be safe, healthy, and effective learning environments for our children," Swenson said.

As a board member, she has supported policies that contained costs, preserved full resources while retaining the highly-valued educators within DUSD. A strength of the district is 'the ability to hire really

good people, especially in the selection of teachers.' This was made evident with the recent accomplishments of students from Warren High School who won the Skills USA Robotics Competition in Kansas City, and more WHS AVID students being awarded the Bill Gates Scholarship and the Dell Scholarships. "It's nice to hear of such achievements by our kids," Swenson says. "This is good stuff."

During her term, Swenson is proud to acknowledge that the District's Academic Performance Index (API) is at 808 exceeding the state's target of 800. This is a 90 point increase since she was elected in 2005. DUSD has a 91% graduation rate when the state average is approximately 78%. Test scores have increased, there were no permanent teacher layoffs, and computer labs with network upgrades are being installed in schools to handle increasing student usage of district supplied iPads, iPods, laptops and desktops.

Four elementary schools received CA Distinguished School Recognition in 2010 and Warren High School was named a CA Distinguished School in 2013 and additionally recognized for 3 exemplary programs.

If re-elected, Swenson said she will continue to strive to see the students of DUSD have an equal opportunity for an optimum education in a safe, learning environment and provide students with college and career readiness skills.

An adage she goes by: "If you're standing still, you're moving backwards."

DRUGS

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tion boxes and will be responsible for the

proper disposal of the discarded drugs.

The 'Drug Take-Back Day' aims to provide a safe, convenient, and responsible means of disposing of prescription drugs, while also educating the general public about the potential for abuse of medications. Most drugs can be thrown in the household trash, but consumers should take certain precautions before tossing them out, according to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). A growing number of community-based "take-back" programs offer safe disposal alternatives, versus flushing them down the toilet. The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) has been diligent in working with the FDA to develop the first consumer guidance for proper disposal of prescription drugs.

This event offers community members an opportunity to rid their homes of potentially dangerous drugs and minimizes the potential for misuse and abuse. There are a few steps in order to take advantage of this community drug take-back program.

If no instructions are given on the drug label and no environmental concerns stated

Then please follow these Drug Disposal Guidelines, from the Office of National Drug Control Policy:

Remove the prescription drug from the original container. Put the mixture into a disposable container with a lid, such as an empty margarine tub, or into a sealable bag. Mix drugs with an undesirable substance, such as cat litter or used coffee grounds. Conceal or remove any personal information, including Rx number.

DON'T: Flush expired or unwanted prescription and over the counter drugs down the toilet or drain unless the label or accompanying patient information specifically instructs you to do so.

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