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Voters overwhelmingly approve Measure A

By Doug Keeler
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Voters approved a one-cent sales tax for the City of Taft by a large margin Tuesday. Measure A, which city officials say is needed to continue to

fund public services, was approved by nearly three-quarters of the voters.

Results posted by the Kern County Elections Department show the measure received 404 yes votes (73.99 percent) to 142 no votes (26.01 percent).

City officials contend

they have lost \$3 million to the state's "burdensome regulations and state money grabs."

The city suffered a major revenue loss when the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation closed the city-operated modified community correctional facility.

In addition, it is facing increased costs for public safety, especially fire protection.

The city's current contract with the Kern County Fire Department is being renegotiated and is expected to double from \$500,000 to about \$1 million in the next five years.



PHOTO BY DOUG KEELER/MIDWAY DRILLER
Wildcat running back Cyris Gaylord sheds Arvin's Josue Salazar. Taft won its final regular season game and will move into the playoffs. See page A4 for a complete report on all the local sports.

TUHS to seek replacement for SRO

By Doug Keeler
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Taft Union High School is looking at all its options to replace its school resource officer when the contract terminates in January 2022. Taft Union Supt. Jason Hodgson indicated his district wants to continue with some sort of law enforcement presence and is looking

at all its options.

"Currently, TUHSD is working on plans to continue partnering with a School Officer in some shape or form starting in February 2022," he said in an email.

Prior to contracting with Taft Police and the Kern County Sheriff's Office for SROs, the Kern County Department of Juvenile Probation had a presence on campus.

Most recently, the SRO for the high school has been deputy Joe Gregory, and Hodgson said the district will miss him.

"As most in our community know, Deputy Gregory is a tremendous asset to Taft High and a vital part of our community both from a safety standpoint as well as an active parent-partner," Hodgson said. Taft City School Dis-

trict Superintendent Julie Graves said she had no comment since the district had not been formally notified.

Kern County Sheriff Donny Youngblood said he needs all deputies available for patrol duties.

He said the KCSO is badly understaffed and he needs to put the officers currently working in the schools back on the street.

TUHS assistant principal leaves

By Doug Keeler
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Taft Union High School has hired an interim assistant principal to replace Monica Toro,

who resigned in October.

The TUHSD Board held a special meeting Monday night and appointed Serena Hinojosa to the post effective Nov. 1 through

the end of the school year.

Toro resigned last month to take a job in Bakersfield.

The voted hired Hinojosa in a short meeting. that also included

the resignations of a math teacher and MOT employee and a closed session to discuss labor negotiations.

No action was taken following the closed session.

OPINION

Get involved in Kern's redistricting

Following the U.S. Census every ten years, redistricting takes place to adjust for population shifts and changes. As we have done every 10 years since Kern became a California county in 1866, Kern County is tasked with redrawing our supervisorial district lines again this year. Although this process only happens every ten years, a common story is being told about the desert and mountain areas that make up Eastern Kern County, largely by those who don't live here.

This tired and familiar story uses a broad brush to paint East Kern into single, blurry picture. This picture fails to recognize the unique and unmistakable characteristics that make up different parts of East Kern. In the same manner that East Kern understands and respects that the valley floor is very diverse despite a

similar terrain, we may need to remind some folks across Kern County that East Kern is also diverse. Despite the similar terrain of mountain and desert regions, the differences that exist across East Kern are evident and meaningful.

Although this is far from a comprehensive description of all the differences, I'd like to illustrate a few important examples of these unique characteristics among our diverse communities. Let me start with the differences between the Kern River Valley, currently in District 1, and Tehachapi, currently in District 2. The Kern River Valley is known for its impressive tourism and recreational activities. This includes fishing, hiking, camping, and whitewater rafting. It also has unique cultural events such as Whiskey Flat Days and the Isabella Lake Fishing Derby. While there are

plenty of recreational activities in Tehachapi, its economy and the livelihood of its residents largely come from different sources. Agriculture is a key characteristic that supports much of Tehachapi's economy and residents, including its world-famous apple orchards, award winning vineyards and ideal landscape for livestock. Coupled with Tehachapi's exceptional wind energy resources and a state prison that employs hundreds, there is a distinct difference from the Kern River Valley's reliance on recreation and tourism.

The desert areas of East Kern also contain unique characteristics that define each of those communities. From Ridgecrest in the northeastern portion of Kern County, to Rosamond in southeastern Kern County near the Los Angeles County line, to all

the unique desert communities in between such as California City, Mojave, Boron, and North Edwards among others, several exceptional qualities exist in this vast desert landscape. The China Lake Naval Weapons Station in District 1 is the backbone of Ridgecrest and the Indian Wells Valley, and its high-tech workforce. The level of engagement required by a county supervisor to understand this mission-critical military base and the complexities of rebuilding due to earthquakes with \$4 billion in federal funding cannot be overstated. Further south in District 2, Edwards Air Force Base/Armstrong Flight Research Center and the Mojave Air and Space Port require an equal level of focus and engagement from a single supervisor. Dedicated knowledge and engagement are essen-

tial to adequately represent their interests, which include being a leader in advanced aircraft flight testing, rocket propulsion, and space technology development, commercialization, and access. Most importantly, representation by two county supervisors in East Kern is vital when it comes to future rounds of the federal Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. A single supervisor representing both military bases could be thrust in a situation of competing interests in the BRAC process by not allowing separate representation and advocacy for each base. Separate representation of each base is very likely vital to the successful future of both.

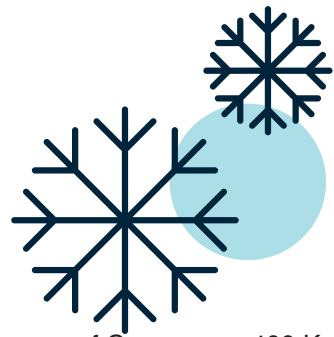
And it's not just aerospace and defense in East Kern's desert. The desert communities of District 2 are unique from the Ridgecrest

area when it comes to diverse and critical economic drivers. This includes mining operations by Rio Tinto and Golden Queen, cement plants, large scale wind and solar projects, and distinct recreational activities for all these communities among others.

Although these are just a few examples of our great diversity in East Kern, these differences are no less distinctive than comparing East Bakersfield to Northwest Bakersfield, which understandably have separate supervisorial representation in those urban areas. We should expect no less for East Kern.

For residents of East Kern, the time for your participation is now and I encourage our communities to get involved!

Your feedback is critically important for the next redistricting
CONTINUED ON PAGE A2



'Let it Snow' is theme for Christmas Parade

It's time already to start thinking about the Taft Christmas Parade.

This year's parade will be held on Monday, Dec. 13 at 6 p.m. and follow the traditional routes east on Center Street from Eighth to Second.

The theme for the 2021 parade is "Let it Snow."

Entry forms are available at the Taft Chamber

of Commerce, 400 Kern Street and online at www.taftchamber.com.

The parade is sponsored by Snow Well Service.



STARTING THURSDAY, JULY 1, 2021
West Side Family Health Care will open at
7:00 am Monday - Friday
Holiday and weekend hours will remain 10:00 am - 9:00 pm

NEW HOURS



West Side Family Health

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For information regarding classes, prices, registration deadlines, ages etc. please call 661.765.6677

