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# Irrigation districts expect lengthy consolidation

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Glenn Moore/Tracy Press

## Byron Bethany Irrigation District

Water flows in a canal next to the Byron Bethany Irrigation District office on Bruns Road.



Posted: Wednesday, July 27, 2016 8:00 pm

By Sam Matthews | 0 comments

The process of consolidating two Tracy area irrigation districts into one was given a push forward this week, but it now appears the process will be more complicated and lengthy than originally projected.

Byron Bethany Irrigation District directors voted unanimously Tuesday to approve a resolution calling for the San Joaquin County Local Agency Formation Commission to begin formal consolidation actions, including a series of public hearings, leading to the merging of BBID with neighboring West Side Irrigation District.

The same resolution was [adopted two weeks ago](#) by West Side directors.

In discussing the resolution before Tuesday's vote, BBID General Manager Rick Gilmore reported that attorneys representing both districts met last week with LAFCo officials to chart the path toward approval by the agency, which sets boundaries of cities and special districts.

"LAFCo indicated that prior to submitting the application for consolidation, they are going to require a municipal services review be taken ... and a property tax sharing agreement, which would have to be approved by the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors."

LAFCo's municipal services review, more detailed than the one planned by the two districts, would closely examine the proposed consolidated district's contractual agreements with municipal and industrial customers, including the city of Tracy. BBID supplies water that is delivered by the city of Tracy to the Patterson Pass Business Park west of Tracy that includes the Safeway and Costco distribution centers.



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In the future, the Tracy Hills development south of Tracy would be served in the same manner, and BBID would provide backup water service to the massive Prologis International Park of Commerce in Cordes Ranch west of town.

Property-tax sharing with an expanded BBID will become a key issue when Byron Bethany boundaries overlap Tracy city limits.

Sharing property taxes is already a contentious issue in the county as governmental agencies — including the county government itself — wrangle over how to slice the property-tax pie.

Just recently, the Tracy City Council discussed efforts to renegotiate the city's tax-sharing agreement with the county, an agreement that council members feel is too favorable to the county.

All of these new wrinkles will prolong the time it takes for the two irrigation districts to work their consolidation proposal through the LAFCo process. Originally, it was believed it could be completed this year, but now it will be pushed well into 2017, boards of both districts agree.

During Tuesday's meeting, BBID's Gilmore stressed that consolidation of the two districts makes sense in a number of ways.

"The two districts being one entity would be a stronger force in the water industry," he said. "Given the political climate we have now, there is strength in numbers."

Following Tuesday's unanimous vote by the BBID board to move ahead with consolidation, Russell Kagehiro, board president, declared, "This is a historic day for both districts."

Jack Alvarez, West Side board president, headed a four-person delegation of board members and staffers to the BBID meeting at its headquarters on Bruns Road near Byron.

Contact Sam Matthews at shm@tracypress.com or 835-3030.

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