

# Water district's payment to firm is questioned

**\$18,600: A board member says she feels the agency isn't responsible for the bill.**

**BY ERIN WALDNER**  
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An \$18,600 payment to a consulting firm came under question at a recent board meeting of the Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District.

"My feeling is that we're not responsible for that bill," board member Stella Parks said at the March 11 meeting.

The Feb. 5 payment was to Wildermuth Environmental Inc., a water-resources consulting firm headquartered in Lake Forest.

The work Wildermuth did relates to a blue ribbon committee established by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors to study water quality in the Beaumont and Cherry Valley area. The committee, made up of residents and experts, has been meeting since July.

Parks wondered why the water district should be responsible for something the county established.

Anthony Lara, the water district's assistant general manager, told the board that General Manager Chuck Butcher authorized the work Wildermuth did. Butcher has been on medical leave since Dec. 12.

The board directed Lara to look into the payment and report back next month.

The Wildermuth firm has researched water quality in the Beaumont and Cherry Valley area and made a presentation to the blue ribbon committee last summer.

Mark Wildermuth said Friday that Butcher received a letter from the committee asking for additional information and that in September or October, Butcher asked him to do more work.

Wildermuth said his firm made a second presentation to the committee around November.

The firm sent an invoice to the water district because its general manager asked for the work.

Bruce Cash, chairman of the blue ribbon committee, said the committee did ask for additional information, if it was available, from the water district and other members of the San Timoteo Watershed Management Authority.

The San Timoteo Watershed Management Authority is charged with local watershed management. The 2006 study that the Wildermuth firm did on water quality was for that agency.

Cash said that it is prudent of the committee to ask questions as part of its deliberations, but that it has no authority to procure work.

He said if the water district felt it needed additional work done by its consultants, "that was between them."

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