

ISSUE

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A Quarterly Newsletter brought to you by the collaborative efforts of:

- Rancho Pauma Mutual Water Company
- Pauma Valley Roadway Association
- Pauma Valley Community Services District
- **With special thanks to our guest author, Rhonda Curtis**

Pauma Valley Community Newsletter

December 3rd, 2024

Rancho Pauma Mutual Water Company

By Chuck Bandy, Board President

On November 1, the Rancho Pauma Mutual Water Company (RPMWC) begins the new fiscal year in a new work space located in the PVSCD/RPMW building at 33129 Cole Grade Road. RPMWC repurposed and remodeled the space formerly occupied by the CHP and PVSCD security personnel. The new space is fresh, compact, and efficient, according to Amber Watkins and Kim Alvarado, RPMWC's senior administrators. The new space includes a small conference room where we intend to hold our board meetings. Although all shareholders are invited to attend our board meetings, space is quite limited. You may also attend via Zoom.

With the move complete, RPMWC may now focus on ongoing operations, in addition to water quality testing, and completing the capital improvements that were identified in the recently enacted FY 2024-25 budget. Among those projects are the rehabilitation of the 300,000-gallon potable water storage tank located on Pauma Heights Road; replacement of isolation valves throughout the service area; and well rehabilitation work.



This Issue

Rancho Pauma
Mutual Water Company-----P 1-2

Rebuilding the
Heart of Pauma Valley-----P 1-2

Pauma Valley
Roadway Association-----P 2-3

Pauma Valley
Community Services District-----P 3

Rebuilding the Heart of Pauma Valley: A Community's Journey

By Rhonda Curtis

For many Pauma Valley residents, the memory of the tragic fire Sunday morning on September 24, 2023, still lingers. It was the day we lost not only the beloved Pauma Trading Post and El Rey Restaurant but also a cherished piece of our community's heart. More than just a spot for groceries and a fresh meat counter, El Rey was our gathering place, renowned for its authentic Mexican dishes and unforgettable margaritas. Now, over a year later, one question is on everyone's mind: what comes next?

Recently, I had the pleasure of sitting down with the owner, Servando "Van" Cueva, to discuss his plans for the future. Van shared that rebuilding efforts are well underway, with only the final permits pending. If all goes well, he hopes to welcome the community back for a grand reopening in late 2025. "We want to recreate the same inviting atmosphere, as much as possible with the current building codes," he assured me. The market will also feature its popular fresh meat counter once again, where Van's famous carne asada—a community favorite—will make its return.

The story of Van and the Pauma Valley Trading Center is familiar to many locals, with numerous articles chronicling his remarkable journey. It all began in 1973. As the youngest of seven children and a native of Guadalajara, Mexico, he was just 17 years old when he arrived in Pauma Valley to visit one of his sisters. Not yet a citizen, he had planned to stay only a few months. One day, while stopping for coffee at the local restaurant, he met Peg Henry, the owner, who was overwhelmed because her dishwasher hadn't shown up. Needing extra money, Van offered to help—and thus began his connection to the place that would eventually become his life's work.

Van never returned to Mexico. Instead, he built a life here, working his way up in Peg Henry's restaurant, getting married, and becoming a U.S. citizen. In 1994, he heard that the owner of the grocery store next to the restaurant was looking to sell. His wife, Martha, encouraged him to take a chance, and with the seller's help financing the purchase, they were able to buy the store. Martha managed the market while Van continued to run Peg Henry's restaurant. A few years later, when the landowner decided to sell, Van became concerned about the stability

RPMWC will also be building out our administrative staff by adding a part time office employee, as well as adding an additional grade 1 field operator. We hope to have the positions filled by 2-1-25.

Chuck Bandy, Board President

Pauma Valley Roadway Association

By Larry Taylor, Board President

The Pauma Valley Roadway was formed in 1981 when the community decided to privatize the roads from San Diego County. The thought was that since Pauma Valley was in a very rural area, we would not receive the improvements and service desired.

The Roadway Association today comprises members, paying between \$850 and \$130,000 annually to maintain our roads. Our current annual budget of \$460,000 has been enough to accomplish our goal to keep our roads safe and in excellent condition. We are also proud to report that only 7% of the budget goes to administrative expenses.

Other Roadway responsibilities include management of the medians, keeping the Roadway sight lines clear, signage, and making sure there is no encroachment onto the roads.

We also work with CSD to ensure that our roads are monitored for illegal parking, speeding, and other driver related issues.



“Renowned for its authentic Mexican dishes and unforgettable margaritas”

Rhonda Curtis

of his grocery store lease. Fate intervened when a “Pauma Angel,” Mr. Giltner, helped him secure a bank loan at a favorable interest rate, enabling him to buy the land.

A few years later, with Peg Henry’s health declining, she needed to sell the restaurant. Grateful for Van’s work ethic and all he had done for her, she had long hoped he might buy it. Yet with the commitments of owning the store and land, Van didn’t think he could take on any more debt. Finally, in 2002, Mrs. Henry made an offer to finance it for him—a proposal too good to refuse.

After the sale was completed, Van finally had control over the restaurant and the chance to make long-desired changes. He envisioned an authentic Mexican restaurant; an idea Peg Henry had resisted. He also wanted to rename it; recalling his early childhood in Guadalajara, he thought of a restaurant called El Rey, meaning “the king” in Spanish. The grand opening

of El Rey Restaurant coincided with the opening of Harrah’s Casino in 2002. Never worried about competition, Van wisely anticipated that more traffic would only bring more business, allowing him to pay off Mrs. Henry in just three years.

“He thought of a restaurant called El Rey, meaning “the king” in Spanish”

When asked if he had found any blessings amid the hardship of the 2023 fire, Van, ever humble and grateful, shared that the unexpected time off had allowed him to make several trips back to Mexico to visit his 92-year-old brother—a silver lining in reconnecting with family. Fortunately, the restaurant’s patio dining area was spared from the flames, offering a comforting sense of continuity as we look toward the future.

As Pauma Valley eagerly awaits the return of our beloved market and El Rey,

Van’s story reminds us of our community’s strength and resilience. We look forward to gathering once more, savoring familiar flavors, and celebrating the enduring spirit of a place that has long been the heart of Pauma Valley.

Follow El Rey Restaurant on Facebook for updates of the rebuilding and design process.

<https://www.facebook.com/ELREYMXFOOD>





Pauma Valley Community Services District

By Eric Steinlicht, General Manager

I'm pleased and welcome this opportunity to provide a quarterly update on the District's activities. This quarter, we revamped our District website to enhance your access to key information, offered a new bill payment option and service request system. Please take a look at our website and let us know your thoughts!
www.paumavalleycsd.ca.gov

We've also made significant progress on the Solar Project, expected to be complete by the end of this year, which will save

approximately \$24,000 annually. Additionally, to support environmental safety we've recently installed a "SmartCover" device that monitors wastewater flows in real-time, allowing us to respond quickly to any potential issues.

I'd like to personally invite you to attend our next Board meeting expected to be held on December 9th, 2024. Meetings are typically held on the month's 4th Monday, at 10 AM. Agendas are posted 72 hours prior to a Regular Meeting

and can be found on the District website. For any questions or feedback, please feel free to reach out to me personally at:

eric.steinlicht@paumavalleycsd.ca.gov

Thank you for your ongoing support as we focus on delivering reliable services, managing rising costs, and addressing the challenges of our aging infrastructure. Best wishes for a safe and joyful holiday season!

Eric Steinlicht, General Manager

Upcoming Board Meetings

- ✓ **Rancho Pauma Mutual Water Company**
MONDAY, DECEMBER 16TH, 2024, AT 2:00 PM
<https://www.ranchopaumamwc.com/>
- ✓ **Pauma Valley Roadway Association**
MONDAY, DECEMBER 9TH, 2024, AT 10:00 AM
<https://www.roadwayassn.org/>
- ✓ **Pauma Valley Community Services District**
MONDAY, DECEMBER 9TH, 2024, AT 1:00 PM
<https://www.paumavalleycsd.ca.gov/>



Roadway Association Continued...

We also act as an insurance / legal agency to make sure our roads are safe, even if the expense is not ours. This year we had two major sink holes on Pauma Valley Drive that we felt were the responsibility of the homeowners along the road. When a couple of the owners refused to pay, Roadway stepped in and made the repairs on behalf of the community, and initiated legal action to have them paid.

Our next Board Meeting will be held on December 9, 2024, at 10:00 at the RTJ Room at the Pauma Valley Clubhouse. If you would like any other additional information, our website is www.Roadwayassn.org.

Larry Taylor, Board President

Pauma Valley Community Services District Election of the Board of Directors

By Eric Steinlicht, General Manager

On December 9th, 2024, your Community Services District plans to introduce its newest three Board of Directors:

- **Mr. Fred Nelson**
- **Mrs. Lolo Levy**
- **Mr. Zann Villanueva**

District staff is excited to work with these newest leaders voted onto the District Board of Directors, starting with this collaborative Newsletter! Happy Holidays from your new District Board of Directors and staff!