



## Perris Press Release

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### Enchanted Heights Meeting Outlines Next Phase of Construction

More than 250 Enchanted Heights residents attended a recent meeting to discuss the next crucial phase of a three-year \$13-million sewer project that will dramatically improve the quality of life in the disadvantaged community on Perris' western edge.

The City of Perris is working with Eastern Municipal Water District, the County of Riverside, the State Water Resources Control Board and the California Department of Public Health on the sewer project, which will replace outdated and failing septic tanks with a state-of-the-art sewer system.

Construction began last summer to install the main sewer lines and a lift station that will carry wastewater out of Enchanted Heights, a 446-home community built about 50 years ago.

To begin work on the next project phase—connecting individual residences to the main sewer lines—Enchanted Heights residents must sign what are known as “right of entry forms” allowing contractors on to their property.

The Jan. 12 meeting at Enchanted Hills Elementary School explained in detail the right-of-entry process. Perris consultant Maria Elena Kennedy has spent the last year speaking to Enchanted Heights residents about the need to support new sewers. Kennedy met with individuals and small groups of residents during informal question-and-answer sessions conducted in Spanish and English.

Kennedy said she was delighted at the huge and enthusiastic turnout at the recent meeting.

“I’m thrilled,” Kennedy said. “Too often communities, especially ones where English is not the first language do not understand complex legal forms. The City’s outreach efforts have paid off as the residents really understood the need for them to sign the Right of Entry form. It is exciting to see the community really engaging in the process of building the much needed sewer system. After speaking to the residents extensively, it is apparent that they are excited to see their community drastically improve with the infrastructure.”

Perris and its partners at the county and state level recently scored a major victory with the announcement in December of a \$5 million grant to pay for the onsite work as well as connection fees. This State Water Resources Control Board grant will ensure that the residents of Enchanted Heights do not incur any out-of-pocket costs for the construction of the sewer system.

Authorities in Perris agree that grant marks a huge boon to Enchanted Heights, which is considered a disadvantaged community.

Ron Sullivan, a member of the Eastern Municipal Water District board of directors, was equally pleased with the large turnout at the recent meeting.

“The amount of owners who attended was great,” he said. “We received about 40 percent of the signatures we need with additional participation coming in the mail from out of area owners. The response really gives credit to the \$5 million (state) grant EMWD was able to secure because it is highly beneficial to the owners, cutting the connection fees and alleviating cost to the community.”

Kennedy said that the months-long community outreach efforts by Perris have been well received by the residents. This was evident at the community meeting when, after a briefing on the project schedule by Eastern Municipal Water District, residents lined up to sign the Right of Entry forms.

Enchanted Heights is quickly becoming a Case Study in how to communicate with Disadvantaged Communities. The city’s outreach program has been lauded by various agencies including the State Water Resources Control Board who is supplying the 5 million dollars for the connection fees and on site work. Additionally U.S. EPA staff has commended the outreach conducted in Enchanted Heights.

The city of Perris is committed to continuing to work with the residents of the community of Enchanted Heights along with partners Eastern Municipal Water District and the county of Riverside.

Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough said the sewer project marks another example of the City’s ability to partner with local and state agencies to bring about positive change for the community.

“This is a true partnership among state and local agencies,” Yarbrough said. “Two state agencies, the California Department of Public Health and the State Water Resource Control Board are teaming up with three local agencies—the City of Perris, the County of Riverside and Eastern Municipal Water District—to bring a regional solution to a very complex problem which has plagued this community for decades. We are very happy to see how the residents have embraced the project and turned out in large numbers to sign the Right of Entry form which will allow the onsite work to begin.”



Perris consultant Maria Elena Kennedy (third from right) is flanked by Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough and Perris Assistant City Manager Ron Carr during a discussion with Enchanted Heights residents who attended a recent meeting about the planned sewer system in the community.