

Bullet by bullet response to the letter from Arthur Cook

The PCOs who attended the meeting came to the meeting burdened with a misconception about the intentions of the Operations Committee, based on matters contained in or omitted from the Privatization Study. For example:

The privatization study was never actually officially received by the Board or even by the Committee. It was removed from the web site in November for that reason and should not be made the focus of this issue.

The study claims that "the District's costs are generally lower than private industry costs..." The cost analyses in the Study reach unsupported conclusions about the relative economies of public and private pest control services. If OCVCD's entire budget, including state support and special assessments, is allocated on a per-service basis, is the cost of such service more or less expensive than private pest control?

It is inaccurate to classify the cost analysis as unsubstantiated it is certainly subject to revision but it represents research into the standard rate charged by several PCOs. A subsequent study is far more detailed and compares a quoted rate that was given to a Trustee by a PCO.

If the only thing the District did was rat control it may be possible to divide the total budget by the number of rat calls and determine the cost of a call that way. Rodent control activities account for less than 17% of the day to day activities of our inspectors. These control activities are performed in the course of other tasks so the combination of activities reduces the cost for any individual activity through the economies of scale and proximity.

The Satisfaction Survey claims 90%+ satisfaction. Satisfaction tends to be high for a service that the individual recipient perceives as free. Would the answers be the same if the Satisfaction Survey told respondents the fully allocated cost of the service they received?

The OCVCD Satisfaction Survey was created to evaluate the District's performance in terms of pleasing the people who came to us for service, and to pinpoint service tasks and areas we should be concerned about. The only identifier found on the survey card is the respondent's zip code; this was to allow us to determine which if any of our Inspectors needed guidance.

Since our service is community based and community funded it would be impossible to speculate on what the results would be otherwise. I don't think reminding the public of the \$6.98 annual cost would change the results much.

The Privatization Study mentions a study of the effectiveness of eliminating RIFA treatments after the first treatment (thereby eliminating PCO participation in RIFA control).

The mission of the Orange County Vector Control District is to provide the citizens of Orange County with the highest level of protection from vectors and vector-borne diseases.

In achieving this mission, the Orange County Vector Control District shall:

- *Be proactive in response to current and future vector threats.*
- *Respond effectively and courteously to the needs of the public.*
- *Inform and educate the public about the shared responsibility of vector control.*
- *Utilize the most effective and safest methods available for the control of vectors.*
- *Provide vector control services in the most cost-effective manner.*

We are bound to evaluate any and all cost saving opportunities, the results of the single treatment RIFA control protocol are in and the new protocol was not as effective as the multi-treatment, so there is no reason at this time to contemplate changing from the existing arrangement. The District will continue to seek cost saving measures.

OCVCD has received a legal opinion that it is not foreclosed by law from providing rat control in the interiors of private structures.

District staff is of the opinion that there is no law or provision in the California Health and Safety Code that prohibits OCVCD Vector Control Inspectors from entering a residence when invited and offering advice, setting traps and making recommendations, there would be no pesticide applications made inside the structure. If that constitutes a “legal opinion”, so be it.

OCVCD staff proposed a rat control privatization program that would give all referrals in a city to the lowest qualified bidder, along with the exclusive opportunity to pitch follow-on service.

The model of the selection process for a service provider was put forward by a Trustee, not staff. The process was described as being similar to the selection of an ambulance service and would be done by the city, on the basis of an RFP and interviews.

Designating a company to subcontract for rodent control based on the "lowest bidder" was never mentioned. We are concerned about the way some operators will market themselves in the "follow on" sales effort.

The PCOC suggests that a program similar to the partnership to control RIFA currently in place be implemented for rodent control.

That leads be shared among qualified private PCOs on an equitable basis.

The term "lead" is troubling; OCVCD is a public health agency. Allowing, and in fact endorsing, a private company to use the public health threat to enhance a business opportunity violates a trust that has been established over 62 years.

That participating private PCOs be prequalified for quality control purposes and trained to perform educational functions to the equivalent or better standards than currently practiced by OCVCD.

There are some differences in the control protocols called for between roof rats and RIFA. OCVCD is involved in the RIFA qualification process and the PCOC selects from the prequalified companies on some type of a rotation basis. The allocation of work orders for the RIFA program all go through Sacramento. There is the potential for dispute in the process if the District were to make the selection.

There is the problem of time, with RIFA the second treatment is to be made 90 days after District staff has made the initial call. While the turnaround time for assigning a service provider by PCOC is well within the 90 days, a resident with a rat in their bar-b-que is going to want someone out the next day.

Training the PCO Field Representatives might be problematic; first of all, they already know how to control rodents, but their service model is based on long term ongoing

service. The OCVCD service model involves engaging the resident in what is truly a shared responsibility—rodent control.

For the most part the OCVCD program consists of educating the resident on how to reduce the carrying capacity of their yard and also the neighborhood. Most of our calls are one time visits with annual revisits fairly common. Usually the resident takes the District's advice and, seals the possible entry points, and reduces the attractiveness of their property and the problem is resolved. There are certainly those who are not willing or able to take on the task and District staff recommends these people hire a private pest control company.

That payment to participating PCOs be based on a thorough and fair study of fully allocated costs to OCVCD and to private PCOs for equivalent service.

There is a thorough breakdown of the cost of a rodent control service call. Because of the small percentage of time spent on rodent control, and the relatively short period of time they involve the study calculated the hourly rate, including all benefits, retirement, health insurance, holidays etc. added to that figure was the same calculation made for support staff. The calculated cost also included materials used, vehicle depreciation, maintenance, and fuel, etc.

That payment to participating PCOs be according to a schedule which takes into consideration basic attributes of the property serviced, not one-price-fits-all.

As far as making payment according to a schedule that considers the basic attributes of the property serviced, there is one big problem. Who makes the determination? The RIFA situation is different; OCVCD makes the initial call, and at that point evaluates the property which determines the fee to be paid for the subsequent visits by a qualified PCO. Since rodent calls usually do not require follow up visits, who would do the evaluation? If OCVCD has to go out and determine the attributes of the property, to set a treatment fee, the Inspector might as well do the work.