



# MEDIA ALERT

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 17, 2020

### Menifee City Council Considering Next Steps After Court Denies Unification of Menifee Parks System

MENIFEE, CA—Since its incorporation, the City of Menifee has placed a high value on local control, including overseeing the operation of Menifee public parks. As such, the City has sought to make all public parks in Menifee City-run. The City embarked on this process to provide improved services at lower costs, with local oversight.

As background, Valley-Wide Recreation & Park District (Valley-Wide) oversees 22 parks within Menifee city limits and had been providing parks and landscape maintenance services east of Interstate 215 (I-215) within Menifee prior to the City of Menifee's incorporation. Valley-Wide assesses taxes on Menifee residents to operate these parks, yet Valley-Wide has no Menifee residents on their Board of Directors. In addition, Valley-Wide's main offices are located in San Jacinto, which is a 30-minute drive from Menifee.

The City feels strongly that if they operated the 22 parks, it could provide **better services** that are more tailored to community needs, **better park maintenance** and upkeep, and **lower tax assessments**. The City is also concerned that Valley-Wide is over-taxing Menifee residents—the services that the residents receive are not worth the taxes that they are paying.

With those concerns in mind, in 2017 the City asked the Riverside County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to transfer control of the Valley-Wide-run parks on the east side of I-215 to the City. LAFCO approved the application—agreeing that the City was better suited to run those parks—but imposed two conditions that were fundamentally unfair and infeasible. One would require that the City conduct a confusing tax assessment election in order to **lower taxes** on Menifee residents for the 22 parks on the east side of the city. The other would require that the City pay Valley-Wide \$500,000 to no longer provide park service in Menifee. If agreed, that payment would ultimately come from taxpayers' money, meaning more taxes. The City is fundamentally opposed to overcharging eastside Menifee residents more taxes for the same level of services residents of the westside of the city receive.

The City brought suit against LAFCO to void the conditions. Unfortunately, in a decision released yesterday, December 16, 2020, the Riverside County Superior Court found that the Commission was within its authority to impose the two unfair conditions. As a practical matter, the Court's decision means the City cannot complete the annexation at this time.

This is a significant setback for the City. The Menifee City Council is still concerned about their residents being overcharged for services below City standards. The City will continue to work to obtain control over the 22 parks that Valley-Wide currently controls within Menifee's boundaries. Keeping up that pursuit is the right thing to do. It will provide better parks, better services, and lower taxes for the residents of Menifee.



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**ABOUT MENIFEE:** *Situated in the heart of southern Riverside County along Interstate 215, Menifee is a vibrant, new city of more than 97,000 residents who enjoy a pleasant year-round climate, abundant recreational offerings, reasonably priced housing and convenient proximity to some of Southern California's premiere attractions and employment centers. Within its 50 square miles, Menifee's business, retail and entertainment outlets are starting to shape the community's character and this growing economic base is also contributing favorably to the city's strong financial position. Menifee's growing family-oriented population values the city's ongoing commitment to public safety, community events and smart growth for the future. All of these elements are working together to support the city's strategic vision to make Menifee one of the state's most promising new cities.*