

Lakeport annexation plan gets commission approval

Contributed by Elizabeth Larson
Thursday, 22 May 2008

LAKEPORT ‐ The city of Lakeport's goal of annexing a 150-acre area along Parallel Drive met with success Wednesday, as the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) voted to approve the project.

The area that will now be added to Lakeport's boundaries is within the city's sphere of influence and is contiguous with current city limits, located between 1862 Parallel Drive on the north and 450 Linda Lane on the south, according to LAFCO Executive Director John Benoit's annexation report.

Running along the west side of Parallel down to the Highway 175/Parallel Drive intersection, Benoit's report states that the area includes about 50 residents and 25 dwellings on 30 parcels, with zoning including single-family residential, commercial and professional office.

Benoit said the area measures 148.87 acres, although the city has reported the area as approximately 150.7 acres.

In April the City Council voted to reapply to LAFCO for the annexation.

The commission held a public hearing on the annexation request, and had a discussion lasting about an hour and a half on a number of issues ‐ from sewer capacity and water production; to impacts on Scotts Valley, where water will be drawn to supply the area; oak tree mitigations; and agricultural lands, said Richard Knoll, the city's Redevelopment Agency manager.

“Those seemed to be the primary issues that were of concern to LAFCO,” said Knoll.

Redevelopment attorney Seth Merewitz of McDonough, Holland and Allen in Sacramento, the city's special counsel on the annexation, made the presentation to LAFCO on the city's behalf, according to Knoll.

LAFCO's 7-0 vote Wednesday morning came a few months short of a year after LAFCO originally turned down the annexation. The original proposal was rejected in a 5-2 vote last July.

“The main question the last time was the cease and desist order, which everyone raised a question about, and that was well taken care of,” said LAFCO Commissioner and Lakeport City Councilman Bob Rumpfelt, who had voted last July against turning down the application.

Then, the commission turned down the request based on its finding that the city lacked the capacity “to provide essential wastewater treatment services to the annexation area,” Benoit's report noted. Those concerns about the city's municipal sewer system's capacity arose following a state cease and desist order for a release of treated wastewater that occurred in April of 2006.

“We were trying to do our job last year in making sure that they would be able to serve the area they were annexing,” said Commissioner and Supervisor Ed Robey, who voted against the annexation last year but supported it this time around. “Last year they hadn't really addressed the deficiencies with their sewer system, but now they have.”

Since then, the city has completed projects to improve its sewer system, and Rumpfelt said the sewer district has enough capacity to supply the area.

Robey agreed, saying the city “stepped up to the plate” and was proactive.

Commission alternate and Clearlake City Council member Judy Thein said she felt Lakeport had worked hard on addressing LAFCO's concerns and that they were ready for the annexation. “I think it's very good for the city.”

She added, “Last time, I don't think they were ready for it.”

During the well-attended public hearing there was overwhelming support for the annexation, Thein said, with only one person in opposition, saying the city can't take care of its current road system. Residents in the annexation area also reportedly voiced support, saying they wanted to be able to hook into the city's sewer and water systems.

The project has commonly been called the “Adamson Annex” for Scottsdale, Ariz.-based developer Tom Adamson, who first approached the city in 2005 about adding the area to the city's boundaries, according to Knoll. The annexation first went to LAFCO in 2006.

There are no projects currently slated to move forward in the annexation area, said Rumpfelt. “There's nothing that's been approved by the city, just talk about what they'd like to do.”

A potential future project the city has favored is a new Mendocino College facility.

Adamson owns a 31-acre parcel where he had proposed to build a 130-unit subdivision. That land also caught the eye of Mendocino College, which is looking for a site for a proposed new Lake Center. A November 2006 bond measure would pay for the land's purchase and initial improvements, as well as the beginning of construction, according to College President Kathy Lehner.

Thein said a Mendocino College representative spoke in favor of the annexation Wednesday, telling the commission that having the land annexed allowed them to consider the site as a possibility.

A fiscal impact analysis prepared by the firm PMC for the annexation concluded that it would result in a net deficit of \$44,810 per year to the city, an amount which could be reduced if the city and developer formed a benefit assessment district to fund such recurring expenses as street maintenance and lighting, and landscaping, according to Benoit's report.

By last May, Adamson has paid the city just under \$57,000 to fund the annexation application, as Lake County News has reported.

As for tax revenue, Benoit's report noted that the city and county had reached an agreement for a tax revenue exchange for the annexation area.

Another annexation project in the city's future involves an area along S. Main Street. Rumfelt said it's not currently on the drawing board. It's also not listed specifically in the city's business plan.

“That's our next logical step,” Rumfelt said.

E-mail Elizabeth Larson at elaron@lakeconews.com.

{mos_sb_discuss:2}