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Incorporation explored anew

By: Matthew Self, The Telegraph

The nine-year old debate over the possible incorporation of El Dorado Hills returns to its roots next Monday.

Residents will be allowed to address the El Dorado Local Agency Formation Commission during a special meeting to be held at the El Dorado Hills Community Services District pavilion.

The hearing, one item as part of a broader LAFCO meeting beginning at 5:30 p.m., meets LAFCO's hurried schedule. The commission is attempting to meet the El Dorado Hills Incorporation Committee's brisk pace in hopes of getting the issue on the November ballot.

Incorporation committee member Norm Rowett said his group, which successfully litigated a settlement with LAFCO nearly five years ago over the pace of the process, is pleased with both the LAFCO's advanced pace as well as the meeting site.

"I think this is (LAFCO) moving forward, especially with it being held in El Dorado Hills for people who are dedicated to the incorporation process. We're very encouraged that LAFCO's doing this," he said.

Members of the committee began the process of incorporation review in 1996, and have been met with a variety of setbacks in the ensuing years. Incorporation was nearly derailed in 2001 when LAFCO demanded a full environmental impact review and an additional \$234,000 in costs.

Support garnered from neighboring areas and affected cities, such as Rancho Cordova and South Lake Tahoe, has renewed the committee's efforts. So has some of the data.

A recent comprehensive fiscal analysis of 16 different incorporation scenarios suggested the city of El Dorado Hills would be financially feasible under all the considered circumstances. It was a shock to local leaders who expected more dire projections with drastically cut backfill from the state's vehicle licensing fees.

The report has brought out some early support. The Bass Lake Action Committee, a group organized to fight the county's effort to build a regional sports facility in the Bass Lake area, has officially endorsed the incorporation issue on the November ballot while withholding final judgement on the overall issue.

"Taking a stand one way or the other would erode our position as an independent source of information for the folks in Bass Lake," said BLAC president Kathy Prevost. "But we agree that the issue should be put to a vote."

Incorporation also maintains its standing opposition.

Bob Dorr, who as an El Dorado County supervisor during the 1980s and early 1990s helped pave the way for the creation of the El Dorado Hills Business Park, has long opposed incorporation.

Signs have been cropping up around El Dorado Hills touting Dorr's anti-incorporation Web site, www.saveedh.com. The Web site holds Dorr's many thoughts on the evils of incorporation, primarily his belief that city services create an unquenchable thirst for more taxes.

He is also concerned about what he perceives as a shift away from the area's charm.

"One of the major problems is it will forever change the character of El Dorado Hills. It will make it more urbanized. If you

want an example, just go down Bidwell, or go to Roseville. The character is the apartments and a lot of commercial (development)," he said.

Dorr sits as chairman of the board of directors for business park business owners and believes the business park is being dangled as a "cash cow" for cityhood proponents.

The incorporation committee favors a city boundary map that includes the business park.

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