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Approval nears for key plan

El Dorado passes another milestone in the long process to OK a new county growth blueprint.

By Cathy Locke -- Bee Staff Writer - *(Published June 20, 2004)*

El Dorado County is one step away from adopting a general plan.

The Board of Supervisors concluded the fourth in a series of public hearings Thursday evening by passing a motion of intent to certify the environmental impact report and adopt a general plan, the county's blueprint for growth, July 19.

The motion passed on a 4-1 vote, with Supervisor Charlie Paine dissenting.

Chairman Rusty Dupray joined the majority vote but added that he would review the document thoroughly. If he is not convinced the proposal adequately addresses traffic concerns, he said, he will vote against its adoption next month.

Supervisors Helen Baumann and Jack Sweeney said that, although the plan isn't likely to completely satisfy anyone, it is important for the county to adopt it and regain control of land-use planning.

"No one got everything," Baumann said. "Some people got nothing. But we'll get a general plan."

Sweeney described himself as "the fool that made the motion to start us down this path in 1989 because I had heard how bad planning was in this county."

Until one has filled out an application for a development project and "tried to untangle the great web spun by the general plan ... you've never understood a general plan," said Sweeney, who owns a surveying business.

The general plan process has taken 15 years, cost about \$15 million and involved 17 different county supervisors, he said. Disagreements have resulted in legal actions and "caused great anguish between people that ought to be friends," Sweeney said.

Supervisors continued to hear arguments against their chosen plan Thursday.

Responding to a lawsuit filed by El Dorado County Taxpayers for Quality Growth, a judge ruled in 1999 that the environmental report for a general plan adopted in 1996 failed to specify the effect residential growth would have on traffic, water and quality of life in the foothills.

Steven Proe of Greenwood, a member of Taxpayers for Quality Growth, complained the proposed 2004 plan - based on a revised version of the 1996 document - misses the mark when it comes to controlling traffic congestion and protecting the environment.

Art Marinaccio of Shingle Springs, who represents property owners in land-use issues, chided supervisors for abandoning efforts to ease restrictions on industrial development in rural regions.

He also criticized the board for trying to make the general plan as legally defensible as possible.

"I'm concerned you will make it so tight that it won't be usable," Marinaccio said.

Representatives of the El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce and the El Dorado County Farm Bureau, however, praised board members for their efforts and urged them to stay the course.

The board majority indicated it intends to do so.

"We've got to get this thorn out of our side," Sweeney said. "We've got to get back to the rest of the county's business."

About the Writer

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