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County balks at voting on map

El Dorado supervisors don't want a business park in a new city of El Dorado Hills.

By Cathy Locke -- Bee Staff Writer - (Published July 25, 2004)

Foreshadowing debates to come, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors declined to take an action that some members argued could be construed as endorsing boundaries for a proposed city of El Dorado Hills.

The sticking point: whether the El Dorado Hills Business Park should be included in a new city or remain part of the unincorporated area.

Supervisor Jack Sweeney said the county took a chance on the original bonds to build the business park in the early 1980s. If the park south of Highway 50 were part of the incorporation, he said, the new city rather than the county would receive the property-tax revenues.

"It's like me buying a building, and about the time the rent starts to pay more than the mortgage, it's taken away from me," he said.

The issue before the board Tuesday grew out of the resolution the supervisors adopted in November to restart the incorporation effort after settlement of a lawsuit between the El Dorado Hills Incorporation Committee and the El Dorado Local Agency Formation Commission, which rules on government reorganizations.

The board stressed at the time that it was acting not as a proponent of incorporation but rather to revive the process and give El Dorado Hills residents an opportunity to vote on cityhood.

To clear up ambiguities in the resolution, Nat Taylor, project manager for the incorporation studies, asked the board last week to declare as the basis for environmental and fiscal analyses a map reflecting revisions made during earlier incorporation proceedings.

"It's really a bureaucratic, technical substitution," Taylor said, adding that the board would have an opportunity to contest the proposed boundaries later. The supervisors could request that the studies include an alternative that excludes the business park from a future city, he said.

But Supervisor Helen Baumann said the decision before the board placed her in the awkward position of endorsing a map that includes the business park in the incorporation when the park's owners have asked that the property remain in the unincorporated area.

"The county has made a tremendous commitment to the business park, and now it's starting to see benefits," she said.

She and Sweeney said the county needs the tax revenue the park generates to provide county residents with public health and other services that cities don't offer.

Supervisor David Solaro asked why Baumann and Sweeney hadn't raised the business park issue earlier. The original map proposed by the incorporation committee and the revised map show the park within city boundaries, he noted. "It hadn't been something that was going to come forward to our board," Baumann said, arguing that determining the city boundaries is LAFCO's purview.

Board Chairman Rusty Dupray said he shared Sweeney and Baumann's concerns. It has been his position, he said, that if major landowners asked to be excluded or included in the incorporation, he would support their requests. "We have letters from the business park requesting to be out (of the city) of El Dorado Hills," he said.

Supervisor Charlie Paine argued that the intent of the board's November resolution was to give El Dorado Hills residents a chance to determine their destiny. He urged fellow supervisors to allow the studies to proceed with the business park in the proposed city and to leave the decision to the voters.

In opting to take no action Tuesday, the board left the choice of a base map to LAFCO.

About the Writer

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