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Proposed boundaries of new city in dispute

El Dorado Hills Business Park wants to stay in the county, and so do some nearby residents.

By Cathy Locke -- Bee Staff Writer

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El Dorado Hills Business Park owners may be happy with county government, but if El Dorado Hills incorporates, the business center should be part of the new city, say people who live and work in the community.

Residents of the proposed city packed the El Dorado Hills Community Services District Pavilion on Monday to urge the El Dorado County Local Agency Formation Commission to approve incorporation boundaries that would provide a balance of housing, business and industry.

People who spoke during the two-hour hearing overwhelmingly supported what has been dubbed the "no-islands" boundary alternative, which includes the business park. Several speakers claimed that business park owners were politicizing the process by requesting that their property be excluded from the city.

Although a comprehensive financial analysis of the proposed incorporation indicated that a city of El Dorado Hills would be fiscally viable with or without the business park, residents argued that the park, south of Highway 50 on Latrobe Road, would be important to the integrity and economic development of the city.

"This is not based on dollars and cents, but common sense," resident David Tierney said, supporting inclusion of the business park in city boundaries.

But Art Marinaccio, a Shingle Springs resident who worked as a consultant for Sammy Cemo, the original developer of the business park, said economics is the issue for property owners, developers and the county.

"It's dollars, and it's money," he said. "The business park is a cash cow. Developers are concerned because it's their money."

Supervisor Jack Sweeney has argued for excluding the business park from the city, saying that the county took the risk of selling bonds to establish the park in the early 1980s, and revenue from the park should benefit residents countywide.

John Hidahl, incorporation committee chairman, said the state requirement that a new city take no more revenue from the county that it received in services before incorporation would ensure that the county was adequately compensated for loss of tax revenues from the business park.

Gail Gebhardt, an El Dorado Hills resident and Cemo Commercial representative, said the business park owners association's board of directors asked for the park to be excluded from the incorporation boundaries. Property owners looking to develop their land are concerned that development costs would increase under a city government, she said.

Gebhardt said development permit fees for a building in an Elk Grove business park doubled from \$50,000 to \$100,000 when that community incorporated.

However, El Dorado Hills resident and businessman Mike Hewitt said the business park owners don't represent the views of many business park tenants. Hewitt said he circulated a petition to include the park in the incorporation boundaries, and 38 of 50 business owners or managers contacted agreed to sign.

Incorporation proponents said a city of El Dorado Hills would be the logical agency to provide services to the business park. They also argued that traffic generated by the business park would affect streets in the city as well as Highway 50.

LAFCO staff members said excluding the business park would create a conflict with state law, which prohibits establishing a city with a significant island of unincorporated territory in its midst. To comply with the law, the proposed boundaries would have to be adjusted to remove from city limits lands to the south and west of the business park, according to a staff member report.

Although most of Monday's discussion focused on the status of the business park, residents of two semirural areas asked that their neighborhoods also be excluded from the proposed boundaries.

Jay Dennis said he represented property owners in the area between Salmon Falls Road and Lake Hills Drive. Most of the residents there, he said, live on 3-to 20-acre lots, and many have cows, goats and chickens.

"We see no need to be in the city," Dennis said. "We're very happy with the county."

Residents of the Marble Mountain Community Services District also said they should be removed from the proposed boundaries, especially if the adjacent Marble Valley were excluded.

Although the commission did not act during the hearing, commission member Rusty Dupray noted that LAFCO has said that if a majority of property owners in an area ask to be excluded from the proposed city, the commission would try to honor their request.

Commissioners asked staff members to evaluate the impact of removing Marble Mountain, Marble Valley and the area between Salmon Falls Road and Lake Hills Drive from the proposed city boundaries.

The commission will continue to hear comment on the boundary and other incorporation issues during its regular meeting Wednesday. The meeting will begin at 5:30 p.m. in the Building C hearing room, 2850 Fairlane Court, Placerville.

Next up

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When: 5:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Where: Building C hearing room, 2850 Fairlane Court, Placerville.

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