

SV neighbors question school site

Noise, environmental damage, traffic cited as potential problems

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SCOTTS VALLEY — Peggy Edwards lives miles from the ocean. But a plan to build Scotts Valley's first high school on three sides of her property, and a proposal for a 112-unit apartment complex a quarter-mile away, has her feeling like "there's a tidal wave coming at us."

Edwards was among 40 people who attended a question-and-answer session Tuesday night about the designated high school site at the abandoned Geyer quarry.

The meeting, led by school Superintendent Andre LaCouture, came on the heels of a heated discussion of the apartment project before the Planning Commission Sept. 14.

Edwards, whose family has lived on the property since 1922, came to the meeting armed with a list of concerns. They included:

- The condition of Bean Creek, which runs adjacent to the site. Edwards maintains the creek is finally recovering from years of pollution, and steelhead trout are returning.

- Traffic. Access to the high school would be almost exclusively via Mount Hermon Road, which is already con-

gested. Residents are concerned about adding hundreds of teen-age drivers to the congestion.

- Environmental impact. According to Edwards, a former botanist for the U.S. Forest Service, the proposed site is home to several plant and insect species listed as endangered or species of concern. They include the Ben Lomond spineflower, the Santa Cruz wallflower and the Mount Hermon June beetle.

- Noise. Because the high school would be in front of the Geyer Quarry cliffs, noise would be amplified as if in an amphitheater — projecting sounds from school bells, sporting events and 1,200 teen-agers.

La Couture repeatedly stressed that only a preliminary evaluation of the site has been done. He said the district has not yet commissioned extensive building plans or environmental impact studies.

"We may find that the property is unfeasible," he said.

He embraced Edwards' list of concerns, saying, "We need to hear these things."

Gene Scothorn, a civil engineer working on the project, was equally sympathetic.

"The opportunity for everyone to be heard will be ample," he said.

When several people expressed dismay over the project, LaCouture said, "Our agenda is to be a good neighbor." That prompted one resident to say, "Then build it somewhere else."

The proposed high school site sits outside city limits, meaning it is under county jurisdiction. Police Chief Steve Walpole has said his department has no intention of patrolling a high school outside the city.

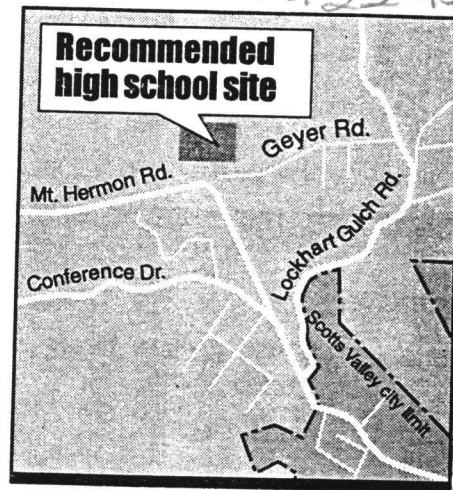
Yet residents at the meeting strongly opposed annexation of their neighborhood.

"We don't want to be part of the city. Most of the residents have lived there for most of their lives and they would just as soon remain country folk," said resident Jack Dufour, who is athletic director for Harbor High School in Santa Cruz.

Not only is the neighborhood the target site for the high school, it's also near the Lockhart Gulch Road location where developer Kaufman and Broad wants to build 112 affordable apartments for low-income people.

Dufour said, "I'm not against low-income housing. It's the density that bothers me. Seven acres, 112 units — one, two, three, four bedroom units. I don't think the area can handle it."

Bob Blonder's restaurant, The Heav-



enly Cafe, neighbors the proposed housing complex and sits 1/4 mile from the proposed high school.

"Putting apartments next to 20-30 acre parcels, it's just not the right place for it," Blonder said.

Edwards, whose property was condemned and split in half in 1970 for the construction of Mount Hermon Road, was among the 75 percent of Scotts Valley residents who voted for the \$22 million bond to build the high school.