

UCSC, city seek middle ground on growth plan

By SHANNA McCORD

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SANTA CRUZ — City voters will decide today if UC Santa Cruz should be forced to cough up millions of dollars to lessen the blow of its proposed expansion on housing, water and transportation — demands made in Measures I and J.

But meanwhile, city officials and UCSC representatives are hoping to strike a deal over who will pay for the costs of university growth that would essentially make the ballot measures moot.

Both sides sat down Friday to try to find middle ground over university growth and avoid the costly legal battle that passage of Measures I and J would only escalate.

In August, UC filed a lawsuit seeking to prevent the city's growth-limiting ballot measures from taking effect. UC contends the city did not provide the required 30-day notice before putting the measures on today's ballot.

The city filed a suit last month against UCSC, arguing growth impacts have been understated — a violation of state environmental law. The suit followed the UC Board of Regents' approval of the university's growth plan and environmental report, which local officials claimed did not fully acknowledge local concerns.

UCSC

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The university's Long Range Development Plan calls for adding 4,500 students, raising total enrollment to 19,500, by 2020.

Friday's meeting was a requirement of the California Environmental Quality Act.

"It was a settlement conference to figure out a way to put litigation on hold before each side starts spending money on pursuing lawsuits," City Attorney John Barisone said. "This doesn't stop the ballot measures."

The city has allocated \$100,000 for the coming legal fight.

A deal between UC and the city would essentially nullify the ballot measures as the city would seek a settlement that provides the same financial contributions asked for in the measures.

The option of a "tolling agreement" was raised during Friday's talks. The agreement would allow the city and UCSC to put their lawsuits on hold and try to agree on a settlement.

Barisone said the agreement should include UCSC mitigating any negative

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impacts associated with future growth.

"The city would prefer phased growth over the life of the (Long Range Development Plan)," he said. "It could mean UCSC paying money."

Ellen Garber, a San Francisco attorney representing UCSC, said the lawsuits will proceed until both sides decide if the "tolling agreement" is the best option for finding a compromise over the growth issues.

"We discussed the concept of a tolling agreement," Garber said. "We're considering it."

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