

Supervisors debate low-cost-housing projects

County supervisors last week approved zoning and General Plan changes for a senior citizen housing project in Live Oak, but made it clear they want to take a hard look before approving any more low-cost housing projects in that area.

After approving the changes needed for a 76-unit project on 2.7 acres on 17th Avenue near East Cliff Drive, supervisors voted to study the housing densities in Live Oak (where most of the county's affordable housing projects have been built in the

last few years) and to look at other areas in the county for future low-cost housing.

That brought an objection from Pajaro Valley Supervisor E. Wayne Moore, who noted that finding new sites for low-cost housing would involve changing the General Plan. "You are talking high density ... I support the current General Plan," Moore said, adding that he didn't think his constituents would support General Plan changes.

Moore voted against the study, but did vote

with his colleagues in unanimous approval of the General Plan changes for the Live Oak project.

The proposed 76-unit seniors project, sponsored by Volunteers of America, had been rejected by the county Planning Commission on a 4-1 vote.

That would have been the end of it, but Supervisor Gary Patton, an advocate of low-cost housing, exercised his prerogative to bring the matter to the board.

Supervisors made one major change from the Volunteers' plan as sub-

mitted — they rejected a proposed zoning and General Plan change which would have allowed a 79-unit motel on two acres next to the seniors site. That land is owned by Claude Stroupe, a builder who lives in Live Oak.

Supervisors, after hearing a half-dozen objections to the motel, agreed to leave the two acres in "medium density" zoning, which would allow a maximum of 35 homes there, but no motel.

The board took audience testimony for nearly four hours. About

two-thirds of the people, many wearing large buttons saying "I support elderly housing," spoke for the project. The other third, mostly residents of the area, argued that the 76-unit project is simply too dense, and that Live Oak is becoming a dumping ground for low-cost housing.

Volunteers representative Steve Mills presented a chart to the supervisors showing that the high-density seniors project would have fewer people and cars (Mills estimated 38 cars for a 76-unit

project) than a town-house project under the already-approved medium density. And the seniors would make fewer trips per car than would younger persons, he said.

Volunteers of America plans to build the project with a Housing and Urban Development loan. Residents of the project would pay 30 percent of their income for rent, with HUD picking up the remainder.

The rezoning and General Plan changes are the major steps for the project, but there's

more. The Coastal Commission will have to approve the project, after which it will go back to the Board of Supervisors. The site plan is currently being reviewed by the county staff.

Supervisor Dan Forbus, who represents the Live Oak area, argued for a night meeting to get more testimony from Live Oak

residents, saying, "If you're not going to ignore the community and not give them a chance to work something out, then you should go for 35 units (on the property next to the project)."

Moore also argued for another meeting, but Patton said another meeting would just be more of what the board had already heard.