

Suits over UCSC growth settled

City, county, neighbors reach deal; university agrees to concessions over roads, water and housing

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SANTA CRUZ — UC Santa Cruz can continue its plans to grow the campus by 4,500 stu-

dents as part of an agreement reached with the city, county and neighbors who had sued the university over its anticipated growth.

In return, university lead-

ers agreed to submit building plans for planned north campus expansion to local government scrutiny, house 67 percent of the additional students on campus and pay development and water

fees that UC officials previously said they were exempt from, among other concessions.

"I think it's significant that the university has agreed to do this, and I applaud them for it,"

said John Aird, co-founder of the Coalition for Limiting University Expansion, a group of neighbors that sued over the campus' planned growth.

UCSC Chancellor George Blu-

menthal said he is "very excited" about the consensus.

"This is the beginning of a beautiful relationship," Blumen-

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thal said. "I think it's a historic moment for the university, and the city, and the county and the people of Santa Cruz."

The agreement means that all lawsuits and countersuits filed over the university's long range development plan, which details growth on the campus through 2020, will be settled. In filing the lawsuits, the city, county and CLUE wanted the university to offset the impact of its planned growth on city infrastructure like water and roads.

Under the agreement, the university also can move forward with plans to build a Biomedical Sciences Facility on Science Hill, a project that had been stalled by the suits.

Details of the agreement include:

■ Total UCSC enrollment will not exceed 19,500 students, with no more than 17,500 undergraduates, by 2020. The campus now has 15,000 students and originally had planned to grow to 21,000 students.

■ UCSC will house 67 percent of the additional students on campus. Fifty percent of all undergraduates and 25 percent of graduate students also will live on campus. Originally, the school had a goal of housing 50

percent of its students.

■ The university will submit plans to build in the forested north campus to the Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission, which regulates the boundaries of cities and special districts, for approval before construction can begin. However, if the application is denied or a legal challenge is made to an approval, the city's requirement to house more students on campus will be suspended until the issue is resolved.

■ University leaders will pay normal city fees for new water hookups, and honor any moratoriums the city might place on development if water runs low. Originally, UC officials had said it was not responsible for those impacts.

■ University leaders will pay normal city fees on new development to offset the expected increase in traffic. UC officials had said the city was responsible for traffic.

The consensus comes after eight months and "thousands of hours" of negotiation, some lasting until 2 a.m., said Santa Cruz Mayor Ryan Coonerty.

The resulting deal "moves us from the poster boy for bad town-gown relations to, hopefully, a model for how universities and communities can cooperate," Coonerty said.

The agreement caps an escalating clash between local resi-



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

UC Santa Cruz officials plan to build a biomedical research facility near this spot on Science Hill. A new agreement with the city and county will allow the construction to go forward.

dents and UCSC as the campus made plans to deal with state-required growth in the number of students it teaches.

The campus' development plan calls for adding 4,500 more students and new buildings on about 120 acres of undeveloped north campus by 2020. City voters passed measures in 2006 forcing UCSC to pay for the impacts of campus growth, or face the possible loss of city water and sewer service to new development. Lawsuits and countersuits flew.

Now, the university's task could be dealing with a group

of tree-sitters that for months have perched in the redwoods slated to be logged to clear way for the new biomedical sciences building.

"The biomedical building will be built and that will require that the tree-sitters leave," Blumenenthal said. "Now there is an agreement, the tree-sitters may feel they have accomplished their goals."

Blumenthal declined to say when groundbreaking could begin on that project.

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