

Scotts valley

Three Men Determine The Appearance Of Scotts Valley

4-9-71
By BILL NEUBAUER
Sentinel Staff Writer

The future appearance of the City of Scotts Valley is being decided weekly, and sometimes more often, by three men who meet without public knowledge or participation in SV city hall.

The men are members of the city's design and review board. They are empowered to establish and to maintain the city's esthetic standards. They do this by considering in detail construction plans submitted by industrial, commercial and residential developers and contractors.

Buildings with brown slumpstone exteriors have sprung up here and there in the city for instance at the dictate of the board.

"They could make people put big red M's all over their buildings if they wanted to." Planner Jun Lee conceded Wednesday night during informal discussion at a meeting of the SV planning commission.

Contrary to general belief, the city planning commissioners have no official voice in decisions of the review board.

The commissioners, who do hold regularly scheduled and advertised public meetings, fought but lost a notable battle last winter to either bring the review board under their authority or to place a commissioner with voting rights on the board.

The only concession the commissioners won from the city council was the right to assign a member to liaison duty on the board, with speaking rights but no voting rights.

The commissioners kicked off the battle because they had no way of checking final development plans to make certain of adherence to all conditions attached to permits issued by them.

The commissioners also fought the battle because of alleged unilateral changes made in development plans by the review board without prior consultation with the planning commissioners.

The planning commission has a limited say in some developments. That is, developments which require use permits, variances or rezonings come before the planning commission first. The commissioners have the right, and often use it, to attach conditions when they act favorably on applications.

However, a number of developments do not come before the commissioners. In this category are developments to be located on correctly zoned land and which are in conformance with permitted uses designated for city areas under the city's general development plan.

A good case in point is the controversial commercial complex and travel trailer park development which was proposed by the Broadway Development Co. of San Leandro early this year.

The site in the Granite Creek overpass area bought for the development is zoned for high density residential use, meaning apartment houses. Had the developer proposed to build apartment houses, he could have gone directly to the design and review board with his plans.

However, because a use permit is required for a travel trailer park, the developer had to apply for one to the planning commissioners. Several stormy meetings were held, with heavy participation by the public, before the commissioners agreed to the development with the proviso that business licenses be issued simultaneously to all businesses in the planned complex.

In the case of the trailer park, Scotts Valley residents had the chance to voice their opinion on a development that will have heavy impact on the future city.

Had apartment houses been proposed, however, the public would have had no say in the deliberations of the design and review board, before which the proposal would have been brought.

The three members of the review board are Councilmen Jim Kennedy and Walt Schulte, and City Engineer Ed Davenport. They are appointees of the city council and are answerable to that body.

Under the powers they hold, they can make or break a proposal without the public ever knowing a proposal is even being considered.

Or they can change the face of Scotts Valley through decisions the city residents cannot protest until it is too late.

The city established the design and review board to speed up action on developmental proposals to encourage location in Scotts Valley of industries, residential units, shops and services.

The planning commissioners lost their notable battle for control of or membership on the design and review board after City Administrator Friend Stone said several times that the city needs an agency that can meet quickly and act quickly to bring developments in.

SV planning commissioners still are not happy about the decision, but have agreed among themselves to go along with it for a while.

Meanwhile, the design and review board is violating the intent, if not the letter, of the Brown Act, state legislation which was designed to give the

public the opportunity to be fully informed on all actions taken by governmental groups on public matters.

The public has no opportunity to become informed because the group meetings are not advertised or otherwise announced to laymen or the press.

(Political Advertisement)

retain
Al Castagnola