

Glenwood proposal presented

Scotts Valley - 1990
Opponent says plan
isn't referendum-proof

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SCOTTS VALLEY — Charles "Chop" Keenan's new Glenwood Meadow development proposal is pared down, with bigger lots and more open space. But it remains to be seen whether it is referendum-proof.

That seems to be the big question now that the Palo Alto-based developer has presented his new 74-home plan to the city.

His previous version, which called for 145 homes on the 194-acre meadow in north Scotts Valley, was shot down at the polls last June.

Now, in an effort to raise support, Keenan has cut 71 homes. He also has removed several elements that deviated from the city's general plan, including plans to grade on a 40 percent slope, which made the project vulnerable to a referendum vote.

But Kerry Williams of Keenan Land Co. said Friday she still did not know if the new plan was referendum-resistant.

"I don't see the point of another election," she said. "It would just continue controversy and divisiveness."

Keenan is also offering to sell a large portion of the meadow for \$4.8 million as an alternative to selling the entire meadow for \$15.4 million.

His opponents have assailed his asking price for the entire property, which was previously estimated at somewhere between \$15 million and \$20 million.

Under his \$4.8 million purchase plan, Keenan says he is willing to sell 164 acres of the meadow, as long as he can develop 51 homes along its western edge.

Under this plan, he would eliminate 23 homes that he wanted to put in the meadow's northern section. This would leave about 90 percent of the meadow undeveloped.

Williams said the idea of selling part of the land makes sense because the 164 acres include the entire eastern portion of the meadow, where most of the sensitive environmental habitat is.

But City Councilwoman Stephany Aguilar, an outspoken Glenwood opponent, disagreed.

"We aren't looking to piecemeal it by any means," she said. "We want to preserve the whole thing."

She also said that Keenan's plan is still vulnerable to referendum. According to state laws, a proposed development can be forced to referendum as long as the developer asks for, and is granted, any exception to the zoning rules or the city's general plan of development.

In this case, Keenan has no choice but to deviate from the city rules because the development plan calls for a larger project than the current proposal, Aguilar said.

She is referring to a specific plan for a failed subdi-

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vision dating to the early 1990s. "To build something different, you'd have to amend (the plan)" she said.

This is the only the latest chapter in the Glenwood debate, which involves the largest piece of developable open space in town. Last year, when Keenan proposed his 145-home plan, opponents said all of the meadow must stay intact because of its rare coastal prairie habitat and its rare insects and plants.

Keenan's supporters said his plan preserved the meadow by setting aside 70 percent as open space.

These days, Keenan's plans are still unlikely to placate preservationists, who say they would accept no more than a dozen homes on the meadow.

Among these is Nick Van Bruggen, one of the leaders behind an effort to place a voters' initiative on the March 2000 ballot.

If successful, the initiative would give voters more power over certain City Council decision regarding development, especially projects that are found to have "significant" detrimental impacts. That initiative would automatically send certain development issues to referendum.

"Will it be subject to the initiative, if it passes?" Williams asked Friday. "I hope not. The election was very confrontational and divisive. As a result, I think most people are burnt out on Glenwood."

"Our goal is to try to come up with a fair, mutually beneficial resolution," she said.

Williams said she is also open to acquisition strategies.

The state Wildlife Conservation Board said Friday it had hired an appraiser who will work with Keenan and preservationists on the selling price. The board is a po-

tential buyer of the meadow but has not entered formal negotiations with Keenan.

The preservationists also are setting their hopes on a \$2.5 billion state parks bill, scheduled for the March 2000 ballot, which contains \$5 million that could go toward buying the meadow.

The subject of all this discussion is a meadow development plan that is a scaled-down version of Keenan's 1998 proposal.

The new plan would develop 32 acres in two phases. The first would involve 51 lots, with most of the homes along Glenwood Drive across the street from the high school, 11 lots above the high school, and five on Tabor Drive, to the east of the meadow.

The second phase would put 23 homes in the meadow's northern section.

Councilman Bart Cavallaro previously said the new plan made him feel "empty" because it eliminated \$8 million in contributions to the city, but Williams said some of the old features would remain.

She said that Keenan still intended to put in nature trails, kick in about \$750,000 for traffic improvements at two nearby intersections and contribute 10 acres toward an expansion of the city's Siltanen Park. She said she could not give a cost estimate for this package.