

Capitola says county 'screwed things up'

Santa Cruz County can do what it wants with traffic and the streets in the Gross Road area of Live Oak, but the Capitola City Council won't endorse it.

The county is looking at four traffic circulation plans for the area that is now targeted by the Live Oak General Plan for heavy development as an apartment-condominium area.

All the plans envision punching 40th Avenue through to Clares Street, providing a connection between Gross Road and Clares.

Variants of the plan foresee the improvement of Deane's Lane between Gross Road and 40th Avenue, or the widening of Gross Road.

The Capitola Planning Commission and city Traffic Committee supported the Deane's Lane option, but the council decided it didn't like any of them.

With Mayor Jerry Clarke abstaining because he's represented a major area land owner in the past, the council unanimously adopted a motion by Councilman Bob Garcia, opposing the 40th Avenue extension, "stating our concerns about the traffic impacts at Clares and 41st Avenue (from the 40th Avenue extension) and stating that they (county officials) have already screwed it up."

The last reference refers to the county approval of Burger King at 41st Avenue and Clares Street, with a drive-through operation off Clares Street, which was strongly opposed by the city.

The city Planning Commission also proposed connecting Gross Road to

Lotman Drive — something Councilman Ron Graves strongly opposed.

Graves attacked that plan and the 40th Avenue connection, reminding the other councilmen of the city's past promises to the area residents.

"It seems the only reason that the plan is being foisted on us now is because there is development," Graves said.

"I don't concur with anything going on and if it is expedient for the county to get our concurrence, they have never asked for it before.

"The Council is on record as not opening up Lotman Drive," he added, and "if it was in the city, we'd never permit 40th Avenue and Lotman Drive.

"The only thing they want," said the blunt-speaking councilman, "is for their development to have to have access to the shopping center. Why impact Clares at all except to make it easier to get to the shopping center?"

Garcia said he doesn't see how the undersized Clares Street can handle any additional traffic from the 40th Avenue connection.

"I don't think we should cut 40th Avenue through," he said, after being told by City Planning Director Richard Steele that the city has an additional 12 feet of right of

way from Burger King to widen Clares.

That was the opinion of Councilwoman Carin Mudgett.

"I don't think we should support their recommendations. We should protect that neighborhood even if no one else does," she added.

The county Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the proposal July 2.

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