

✓ Sand loading terminal in Felton gains support

Felton-1990
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SCOTTS VALLEY — Council members are interested in a proposal by Sierra Pacific Railroad to build a loading terminal in Felton, which would enable the railroad to haul sand over the hill by rail and reduce the number of sand trucks on city streets.

Mike Hart, Sierra Pacific's executive vice president, told council members Wednesday night that county planners and Supervisor Fred Keeley support the company's application for a permit despite earlier concerns.

"They don't see a major problem in the initial plan," said Hart, noting that county officials had suggested he get Scotts Valley's support to add strength to his application.

Sierra Pacific (formerly Eccles & Eastern Railroad Co.) wants to truck sand from local quarries in the San Lorenzo Valley and Scotts Valley area to a loading terminal next to Roaring

Camp Railroad in Felton. The area is zoned for industrial use and only an amendment to the existing permit would be required.

Sand would be moved by train over existing track to Santa Cruz, where it would be transferred to the Southern Pacific rail line.

Hart said the company doesn't need county permission to use the tracks, but it does need a permit to operate the loading facility in Felton.

Keeley said he was pleased the company agreed to negotiate with the county.

"I think they found the process much less frightening than they had anticipated," Keeley said Thursday.

The long-term goal is for Sierra Pacific to build a rail line to move sand directly over the Santa Cruz Mountains and into Santa Clara County.

"If there's any one place that benefits most from this besides the commuters on Highway 17, it's the city of Scotts Valley," Hart told City Council mem-

bers.

If the planning process stays on schedule, said Hart, the operation could start in late April. More likely would be a start in early June.

The council directed Planning Director Bob Hanna to look into the proposal and draft a letter of support if nothing adverse is found.

When the permit application is filed, Keeley said, he would make sure residents with concerns about the project are informed so they can make comments before final approval.

Early projections were to move 300,000 tons of sand a year by rail instead of road, eliminating thousands of sand-truck trips over Highway 17. Most of the trucks use Mount Hermon Road through Scotts Valley.

"We hear a lot in Scotts Valley that we don't have much culture and people get upset if we start to deprive ourselves of what little culture we have left," said Mayor Michael Shulman. "But I guess this is one bit of our cul-

ture (sand trucks) we wouldn't mind decreasing a little bit."

Citing the county government's decision to drop an over-the-hill rail plan, Vice Mayor Joe Miller said, "I don't think government can build buildings or bridges or rail lines any more, particularly in this part of the world. We're going to have to leave this to you."