

New Scotts Valley group counters development plans

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SCOTTS VALLEY — About two dozen homeowners have banded together to fight what they fear is a growth-happy City Council that ultimately may cave in to demands of the Glenwood Estates developer.

"We have been very sleepy citizens, and all of the sudden we're worried we'll have a mini-Silicon Valley here," said Sue Krevitt, one member of the newly formed Scotts Valley Area Residents for Better City Planning made up of people who live just outside the city.

Mayor Michael Shulman suggested group members are more interested in killing a development proposed in their own backyards than in helping manage growth citywide.

"I don't get the impression they're listening to what the city is saying," said Shulman, pointing out that the council refused last week to allow the Glenwood Estates developer to proceed until more information is submitted. "They're free to speak their minds, but I can't see them bringing anything new to the table."

But Krevitt said she has broader concerns, including water, open space and traffic.

"You can't just take one project and say it's a concern, because it all interconnects," said Krevitt. "We can't just build out and say, 'Oh, dear, what about water,' but that looks like what they're doing. There's just not the foresight."

The group met with county Supervisor Fred Keeley Monday night to talk about how the city's growth is putting pressure on the Santa Margarita aquifer, which is the sole source of water for Scotts Valley and the San Lorenzo Valley.

Keeley, who represents both areas, said Tuesday his only concern is the water supply, particularly because approval of this housing and golf course project on Glenwood Drive near Vine Hill School and Siltanen Park rests with the City Council.

Keeley is working with the council and the Scotts Valley, San Lorenzo and Lompico water districts to develop an agreement that requires all sides to work with the county in managing the water supply.

If that agreement is not reached, said Keeley, state Sen. Henry Mello is prepared to introduce legislation creating an agency that would do it for them.

"Time is of the essence," said Keeley. "If we don't protect this groundwater basin ... then it will cost millions and millions of dollars to find another source, and that would be a terrible legacy to fu-

ture generations. ... What we'd be saying is, 'Here, we're handing you the water equivalent of the federal deficit.'"

In the wake of Mello's vow to create such a water-management agency if all sides don't get together, there has been more cooperation between Scotts Valley and the county.

Documents are being handed back and forth, and Keeley hopes to have a water-management agreement in time to make sure current development plans won't overtax the water supply.

Scotts Valley Area Residents for Better City Planning has targeted the Glenwood Estates project not only for its potential drain on the water supply, but also because it would be built on one of the few large pieces of open land left in the city, said Krevitt.

The group has taken out paid advertisements in local newspapers encouraging Scotts Valley residents concerned about ill-planned growth to attend the city Planning Commission meeting at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at City Hall.

Commission members were expected to conduct a public hearing on a request by BRUSA Corp., developers of the Glenwood project, to begin Phase 1. But that may not happen because the City Council directed that a development agreement on any phased-in plan be in place before building begins.

In fact, as of Tuesday afternoon, the developer had not responded to staff requests for a development agreement. BRUSA Corp. president J.H. Tromp Meester was unavailable for comment.

Even if Meester doesn't attend Thursday's meeting, said Krevitt, her group still wants to be heard.

"(We) hope that more community participation in citywide development will greatly help to assure high standards of living in this beautiful valley," she said.

Shulman pointed out that members of the citizens group live outside the city limits and "from what I can tell they can't even see the project. ... The impact on them is not comparable to what it will be elsewhere in the city."

When Glenwood Estates was first proposed in 1987, about 25 acres of the original 282-acre project wandered from northern Scotts Valley onto county land. But supervisors balked at allowing part of the golf course on county land because of environmental concerns, so developers redesigned the project to fit on the property within Scotts Valley.

"When they (developers) gave us Plan B, they started making sounds about 'cluster-style housing' and they dropped the word 'estate,'" said Krevitt. "It was time to get active."