

City votes to take \$1M for Polo Barn

By Joe Shreve
Press-Banner

The outlook is bleak for those wishing to preserve the Polo Ranch barn in Scotts Valley, as a last-minute agreement by the Scotts Valley City Council to gauge the interest in possibly moving the structure to the Pasatiempo Golf Course seems unlikely to gain traction.

In a unanimous decision, the Scotts Valley City Council voted Wednesday night to allow developer Lennar Homes to demolish the deteriorated Polo Ranch buildings in exchange for a \$1 million payout to the city — the funds that Lennar had originally budgeted to preserve the structures.

Councilman Dene Bustichi called the decision a pragmatic one, citing the ways that the \$1 million could be better used for public works, parks, youth programs and other such underfunded things in the cash-strapped city.

"It's great to want to save something, but Scotts Valley has needs and the needs go beyond the wants," he said.

Several members of the Scotts Valley community spoke out against the city's decision at the meeting, citing the historic significance of the site, which was originally

a horse ranch owned by Marion Hollins — the founder of the Pasatiempo Golf Course — in the early 1900s.

As a result, the council and Gordon Jones, president of Lennar Homes' Northern California division, agreed to delay any dismantling, however, until after the second reading of the agreement — approximately a month's time — in order to reach out to the Pasatiempo Golf Course to gauge interest in relocating the barn there.

"We did think that was a pretty good idea," Jones said at the meeting. "But whatever it costs to move the structure to Pasatiempo would have to come out of the \$1 million."

However, Pasatiempo General Manager Scott Hoyt said that relocating the barn to Pasatiempo was unlikely.

"We attempted over the last month and a half to sit down with the city and the developer," Hoyt said. "We could not get at a table with them."

He said that Jones had been on-board with the idea of moving the barn to Pasatiempo, but the city seemed uninterested.

Hoyt said that was evidenced when neither Lennar representatives, nor councilmembers Dene Bustichi and Randy

Johnson showed up at a meeting between the three that Jones had arranged.

"(Jones) is up for anything," he said. "But the City of Scotts Valley stopped responding — they assumed their \$1 million would be lost."

Hoyt said that he and several Pasatiempo representatives had checked out the buildings and had been interested in working out an arrangement "a win-win," but the organization couldn't afford to shoulder the entire price tag of moving the barn.

"We were just trying to be another option," Hoyt said. "But they can't expect us to shoulder 100 percent of the costs."

Lennar Homes originally acquired the property in 2009 to create a planned 40-lot subdivision, with the notion that the Polo Ranch buildings be relocated and preserved as part of a park and trail system. However, the site fell into disrepair over the years due to vandalism and lack of maintenance.

The \$1 million paid to the city buys out the developer's responsibility to preserve the barn and former caretaker's quarters of the Polo Ranch and allows them to be demolished. In their place, the developer will be required to construct park space.