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Scotts Valley loses court fight over annexation procedure

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SCOTTS VALLEY — Eighteen months ago members of the City Council joked about efforts by county supervisors and the Resource Defense Fund to stop annexations to the city before "spheres of influence" maps were completed.

With a ruling this week from the state court of appeal supporting the Resource Defense Fund, the joke appears to be on Scotts Valley.

It could take more than two years now before any more lands can be annexed to the city with the approval of the Local Agency Formation Commission, the agency whose job it is to draw boundary lines between cities, counties and public service agencies.

Commission Executive Director Pat McCormick said today the commission won't start studying Scotts Valley's sphere of influence until late spring. How long it will take to complete the maps remains to be seen.

McCormick said the quickest the Commission has ever moved on a map is six months. A map for the City of Watsonville, however, took two years to complete, said McCormick, and that map still faces a potential challenge in court because an environmental impact report was not done.

City Administrator Bob Rockett is not worried over the court ruling since "there are no annexations we're out there galloping after."

However, the city Planning Commission does have a public hearing set for Jan. 24 on the rezoning of 12 acres northeast of the Sky Park Airport site owned by Ron McNeil and 83 acres on Graham Hill Road owned by the city. The rezoning is a first step toward annexation.

McCormick said there's nothing to keep the city from holding such a public hearing, but "the process would come to a screeching halt when it comes to the commission" until a map is done.

It was during a 1981 discussion of a rezoning of 96 acres on the east side of Highway 17 that then-councilmembers had joked in about their defiance of the supervisors and the defense fund.

Councilman Ray Carl, still a councilmember, had said at the time the rezoning "gives the City Council an opportunity to show Mr. Patton (County Supervisor Gary Patton) how brazen it can be."

As a member of the Local Agency Formation Commission, Patton had voted against an annexation by the city for the Sequoia Research/Development Park, also on the east side of Highway 17.

The Sequoia annexation was the basis for precedent-setting court of appeals ruling.

At the 1981 council meeting, then-Mayor Friend Stone had said: "We are going to have all the cities extend their boundaries until there is no more county."