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Many questions asked about draft General Plan

By ROGER H. AYLWORTH - Staff Writer

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OROVILLE -- In a still-under-construction building near the Oroville Airport, about 100 citizens gathered to learn and ask questions about Butte County's draft General Plan 2030.

After more than three years' work and following more than 100 public meetings, the draft version of the plan was released to the public earlier this month.

The more-than-400-page document details policies, goals and planned actions related to the future growth and development anywhere in the unincorporated area of the county.

- [Visit site](#) To get more details about the Butte County General Plan revision process

People at the Thursday night meeting, conducted in the "Energy Farm" at 2015 Challenger Drive, were given a thumbnail review of the eight "elements" that will be part of the eventual document. If things go on schedule, it should go before the Board of Supervisors for final adoption in just about a year.

The elements include land use, economic development, agriculture, water resources, circulation, conservation and open space, health and safety, and public facilities and services.

As Tanya Sundberg of Berkeley-based Design, Community and Environment, the county's chief consultant in the General Plan process, described

the meanings and significance of each of the elements, the importance of the total document was demonstrated by the concerns of people in the audience.

While there is an enormous amount of information in the document, people wanted to ask specific questions about how changes in land use designations, potential zoning, deer herd ranges and other aspects of the plan would affect their lives and their property.

A contingent of citizens from the Concow area wanted to know what a proposed change of land use designations from timber-mountain to the newly created resource conservation would mean to the residents.

The description of property in the resource conservation zone calls for dramatically larger minimal parcels sizes than are allowed under the existing timber-mountain standard.

"We found we're a resource conservation area, and not a community," said a woman from Concow, "and that kind of surprised us because we know we are a community."

Joanna Jansen, also of Design Community Environment, explained legal existing properties, even though they didn't conform to the new minimal parcel size, would be "grandfathered-in" when the new plan is adopted.

Another woman asked if the draft General Plan is "set in stone?" The officials explained that public meetings about the draft plan will continue through January, and beyond that there will be hearings before the supervisors.

One man said the overlay zone related to the foothill deer migrations is based on outdated data.

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He demanded that a detailed census of the deer based on close observation and radio collars on the animals be conducted before any overlay is enforced.

A Kelly Ridge resident wanted to see rules written into the General Plan that would prohibit people from leaving junked cars and other debris on their lots in his subdivision.

An individual from Paradise wanted the plan to guarantee evacuations routes be developed and improved from the upper ridge area.

The consultants and county staff took notes on all the comments and promised they would all go into the pot for possible revisions to the draft.

Up to date information about the General Plan process, including downloadable copies of the draft and other documents, can be obtained at the project's Web site at www.buttegeneralplan.net.

Staff writer Roger H. Aylworth can be reached at 896-7762 or raylworth@chicoer.com.

BACKGROUND: After more than three years and more than 100 public meetings and workshops, a draft version of the Butte County General Plan 2030 was released earlier this month.

WHAT'S NEW: This week citizens had their first chance to comment on the draft during a public workshop.

WHAT'S NEXT: Meetings and workshops on the draft will continue until at least January 2010.

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