

## Residents in Gridley area wonder what land change could bring

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GRIDLEY -- A meeting on land use designations in the Gridley area that wasn't supposed to reach a resolution Monday night achieved the goal, but it also heard more than 100 area residents ask, "What does this mean to me?"

While the question was phrased in numerous ways, people living on nearly 4,600 acres in county jurisdiction around Gridley and Biggs all wanted to know how, or if, the change of the letter "A" to the letter "R" would impact their lives.

At its core is the area's land use designation under Butte County General Plan 2030, which was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in October, and becomes effective today.

Under the General Plan, the land under discussion was officially designated "agriculture" with 20-acre minimum parcel sizes. That changes it from the former ag-residential five-acre minimum parcel sizes, which no longer exist in the new General Plan.

Butte County Supervisor Steve Lambert, who represents the area, said the land is not appropriate for Ag 20 because it is largely broken into one- to 10-acre parcels.

At his urging, and with the rest of the supervisors in concurrence, county staff is investigating a land use designation of "rural-residential."

That change from an A, as in agriculture, to an R, as in residential, had many people concerned.

Many questions focused on whether the use of the word "residential" would encourage the city of Gridley to "gobble" them up in an annexation.

Tim Snellings, county director of the Department of Development Services, assured the crowd that Gridley had no economic reason to annex the land. He said the area simply wouldn't generate enough tax revenue to make it worthwhile.

Others asked if the change in designation would prompt developers to rush in and turn the area into one massive subdivision.

Lambert said that change to R-R five-acre minimums would result in creating only 13 new lots over the entire 4,600 acres.

The supervisor began the meeting by saying the process was not being driven by developers and there were no "subdividers" waiting in the wings to sweep into the region.

Other questions included:

\* "Would it raise my taxes? Snellings said no.

\* "Could we still do the ag things we have always done?" Snellings said yes.

\* One person asked if the change would have an impact on existing structures or parcels.

"No houses are being torn down. No parcels are going to be deemed illegal," said Snellings.

The question that was perhaps the hardest for the county officials to answer was, "If the change in designation has no real impact on our lives or property, why do it?"

Snellings and Lambert said the current designation isn't reflective of what is actually on the ground, but they both admitted that the change wouldn't really mean much.

Lambert said the meeting is part of an "outreach" effort by the county to find out what the people want for their land.

"We're with the government. We are here to help," quipped Lambert to a chorus of laughs and groans.

"We are really here as an outreach deal," said Lambert.

"It is not set in stone. Hopefully we will come to a consensus that works best for everybody," he continued.

The supervisor said there will be more meetings and discussions on this topic. He promised future meetings will be announced so public participation can continue.

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