

Butte County General Plan 2030 adopted, but some asked for delay

By ROGER H. AYLWORTH - Staff Writer

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OROVILLE -- After four and a half years of work, followed by three and a half hours of debate, the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday adopted the document meant to chart the future of Butte County for the next 20 years.

Paradise Supervisor Kim Yamaguchi cast the lone nay vote as Butte County General Plan 2030 was adopted.

The plan is meant to lay out in broad terms the direction of residential and commercial growth in the unincorporated area of the county.

Sixteen individuals spoke Tuesday of concerns with the product. One of those was Yamaguchi. He said the plan's economic element is inadequate, and that the proposed land use portion has only about 100 acres designated for research parks.

Supervisor Bill Connelly of Oroville, who chairs the board, said the plan endorses a range of business interests, such as ag-related products.

Supervisor Steve Lambert, who represents the 4th District, which covers mostly the southeast corner of the county, said not everybody will be working in research parks.

Connelly said there are problems with the plan and said there will be months yet to identify and correct

them.

More than a dozen citizens spoke to the board about their concerns with the plan and with the environmental impact report that was part of the package of documents approved Tuesday.

Several people, including a contingent from the Butte Valley area near Butte College, claimed the water element of the plan and the review of water concerns in the EIR are

inadequate.

Chico attorney Richard Harriman, who said he was at the meeting representing the Butte Environmental Council, said the EIR failed to properly analyze the cumulative impacts of development on groundwater in the county.

Harriman hinted broadly that if the alleged flaw isn't corrected, it might result in a lawsuit.

He suggested the county suspend approval of the General Plan and the EIR for 60 days to allow county staff to do the in-depth analysis he charged was missing.

Others also urged the board to delay action until the analysis is completed.

Paul Gosselin, the county's director of Water and Resource Conservation, disputed the claim.

He said the water element of the plan, the EIR and the voluminous documents prepared since the project began in 2006 have a detailed review of the county's groundwater situation, and point to places around Chico, Durham and the foothills that are "problematic" for future groundwater production.

Chico Supervisor Jane Dolan also said the EIR looks



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at the effects of adopting the General Plan, but it is not meant to be project-specific. For the county to do the kind of study being proposed would be costly and "very speculative" because the county would have to guess what development would happen and where.

Eventually the plan, the EIR and the associated "mitigation" measures related to both were approved on 4-1 votes, with Yamaguchi in opposition.

Additional votes to add other elements to the plan and to ask county staff to review the change in land use designations for nearly 5,000 acres in the Gridley, Biggs, and Palermo areas all passed unanimously.

Lambert and Dolan stressed that the shift in proposed General Plan designation will reflect the land uses as they really are and will not actually change the land use.

Even with Tuesday's vote, the General Plan 2030 effort is not completed. The county is working on a new zoning ordinance and a related environmental impact report. State law requires that the zoning and the land use designations are in complete agreement.

Final action on the zoning and its EIR won't happen until next spring.

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