

Woodlands map on hold

After full day of hearings, vote on tract map delayed for a month

April Charlton

P u l i t z e r

After 15 years in the making, the biggest project to ever garner county approval has yet to win acceptance for the development's subdivision tract map.

And after a full day of hearings last week on the Woodlands' phase one tract map, it's going to be at least another month before the map and its 120 conditions are possibly approved.

With two commissioners absent — Doreen Liberto-Blanck and Wayne Cooper — the County Planning Commission voted 2-1 to continue the hearing until its Oct. 24 meeting, citing a need for more time.

"This is a huge project, and we don't come across projects like this very often," Commissioner Cynthia Boche said. "I don't see the public's interest is being served by rushing through this."

Her comments came as the hearing that began shortly after 10 a.m. was heading into the 6 p.m. hour., with another lengthy hearing yet to follow.

Chairman Bob Roos, the lone dissenter, wanted to approve the map so the commission could find whether Woodlands has adequate water to serve the 957-acre mixed-use project for at least the next 20 years.

But he was reluctant to approve the map without first deciding whether the project has ample water, which was scheduled to be certified by the commissioners after approval of the map.

A newly enacted state law requires a developer planning 500 or more homes to first prove that a 20-year water supply exists for the development before a tract map can be issued.

PH Property Development — the firm responsible for creation of the Woodlands project — plans to form a mutual water company that will serve the 1,320 homes, 500-room hotel, two golf courses and business park planned for Woodlands.

Marie Cooper, PH Property Development's water attorney, told commissioners the county can provide verification of the 20-year supply because the water will be coming from a mutual, not-for-profit water company.

She also said the project's water supply was verified by the County Board of Supervisors when the Woodlands' environmental impact report was certified in 1998 and a supplemental EIR was certified in 2000.

"The only question before you today is, has anything changed since the Growth Management Ordinance?" Cooper added. "Nothing has really changed ..."

However, the Nipomo

Community Services District Board of Directors contends that PH Property may be violating the mitigation conditions supervisors placed on the project's EIRs by self-certifying Woodlands' water supply.

The district wants its well on Sun Dale, which is directly across from Woodlands, to be included in the project's well monitoring program required by the mitigation measures.

"Our wells have the potential of being fully impacted (by Woodlands). You can't help but conclude that our wells will be affected," said Jon Seitz, NCS D's legal counsel.

"This is the last time the public will have any input. You don't merely tack on water supply as a condition. You need an independent attorney to approve (the water supply)."

John Janneck, PH Property spokesman, was so distraught over statements made during the hearing that he shook as he addressed the commission.

"The NCS D tried to buy one of our wells three times," Janneck said. "There's no fairness here. They put in the Sun Dale well and now they want us to monitor it and maintain it for them. ... I feel betrayed."

Cooper argued that if NCS D was so concerned about the impact on its wells, the issue should have been raised four years ago during the public hearings on the EIR.

"It's too late now (to raise those concerns)," she added. "We're on opposite sides of the (Santa Maria Valley groundwater) lawsuit and most of this is posturing for the lawsuit. It doesn't change the substantial evidence that water for the project does exist. (NCS D) isn't acting as

See **WOODLANDS**, PAGE 6

Woodlands: Vote on tract map delayed

WOODLANDS, FROM PAGE 2

if there's any water problems on the Mesa."

She also said if the commission approved the tract map and water adequacy, the decision would be automatically appealed, giving additional time to review changes and addendum to the project's EIR.

The NCSB Board of Directors had requested the hearing be continued and gave its staff the authority to file an appeal if the commis-

sion approved the map and water supply.

But because at least three dozen new conditions of the tract map were either added or deleted during the seven-hour hearing, Boche successfully argued that the commission and the public needed additional time to review the changes.

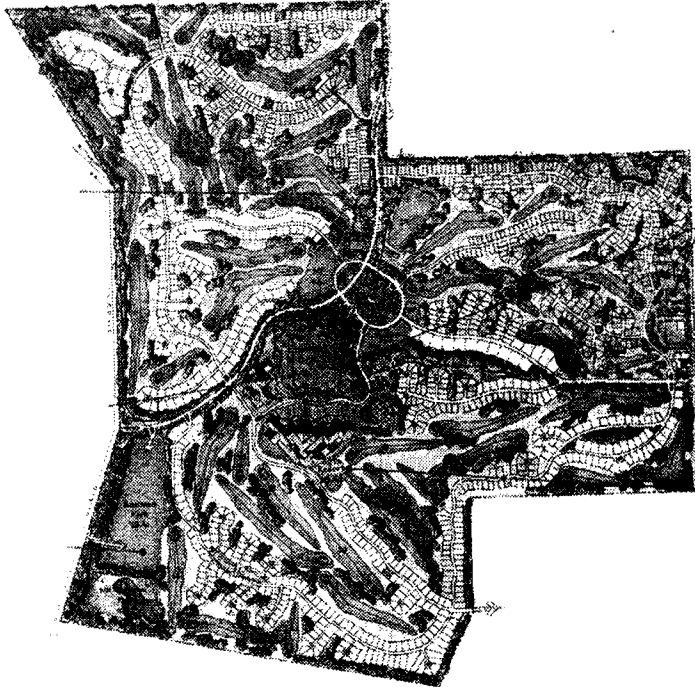
"We've been given reams of paper today," she said. "I don't feel like two more weeks is that much time in the context of things."

Although last Thursday's

public hearing on the Woodlands' tract map was closed, when the commission reconvenes later this month the hearing can be reopened if the commissioners wish.

More than three dozen of the 120 conditions placed on Woodlands were also pulled and discussed and can be reopened and voted on during the continued hearing.

Staff writer April Charlton can be reached at (805) 489-4206, Ext. 5016, or by e-mail at acharlton@pulitzer.net.



Contributed

AT A STANDSTILL — The county has yet to improve the Woodlands tract map. The entire project is 957 acres, planned for the Nipomo Mesa.