

SLO County housing ordinance delayed

By April Charlton/Senior Staff Writer

San Luis Obispo County will be without an "inclusionary housing" ordinance until at least April, as county planners have been charged with updating the proposal's environmental impact report after concerns were raised in Nipomo.

The proposed ordinance would require that a percentage of all new residential construction in the county be affordable to people with low to moderate incomes.

The draft ordinance was in front of the county Planning Commission on Jan. 10 for review and possible approval but was sent back to the drawing board for some "slight changes," County Planner Dana Lilley said.

Planning staff plans to bring the changes back to the commission Thursday, but Lilley said no action will be taken during that hearing, in part because of the need to revise the EIR.

"The bottom line is that the commission won't take any action on the ordinance" until at least April, Lilley said.

The original EIR looked only at how the proposed ordinance would affect a community's present water use and how that might increase when the community is completely built out.

Planning staff is now revising the document to look at where a community's supplemental water would come from and how buildout and future water needs would be affected if the county adopts inclusionary housing, Lilley said.

The proposed ordinance would require that a percentage of all new construction in the county's unincorporated areas, such as Nipomo, be affordable to people with low to moderate incomes.

If a project's developers choose not to build the affordable units in their project, the draft ordinance allows them either to pay the county an in-lieu fee, build the units off-site or dedicate land to the county for the units' construction.

The need for a revised EIR was prompted by the Nipomo Community Services District's efforts to have the county look at future water use and needs and how that relates to inclusionary housing.

The revisions to the EIR "were prompted by Nipomo, but we'll also be looking at other areas," Lilley said.

Nipomo is dealing with an impending water shortage and

hasn't secured a supplemental source yet; if the community keeps pumping from the groundwater basin at the present rate, seawater intrusion is expected by 2019, according to a district study.

The Board of Supervisors has also declared a state of Level 3 water severity for Nipomo, meaning that demand is already exceeding supply. Nipomo's only source of water is the groundwater basin.

Once the inclusionary housing ordinance is approved by the Planning Commission, it will be forwarded to the supervisors with the commission's recommendations.

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