

EDITORIALS - LETTERS

San Diego County board of supervisors to voters: Drop dead!

By FRED SCHNAUBELT
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When San Diego County supervisors Greg Cox, Bill Horn, Dianne Jacob, Ron Roberts and Pam Slater-Price approve the new General Plan, they will be telling the voters: Drop dead!

By hook or by crook their Planning Department found an ingenious way to implement provisions of Propositions B and A that were rejected by voters in recent elections. The new General Plan thwarts the will of the voters, nullifies two elections and pits the supervisors against the people who elected them.

In 1998, by a majority vote of 59.49 percent, Proposition B was rejected by county voters. Prop. B was also known as the Rural Heritage and Watershed Initiative, which would have mandated large lot zoning requiring one house per 40, 80 or 160 acres on some 600,000 acres, or 25 percent of the county's total unincorporated area. Land owners in the backcountry were outraged and a major effort was launched to oppose Prop. B. During the fight to save property rights, CPPR mailed 75,000 brochures to county residents to inform them of

the property rights abuse and to organize resistance in an effort to help defeat Prop. B.

Then in 2004 an even greater percentage of voters or 64.33 percent rejected Proposition A, the Rural Lands Initiative that was another attempt for large lot zoning. It would have dictated minimum lot sizes of 40 or 80 acres, a dramatic increase from county zoning of two, four and eight-acre parcels within some 694,000 acres. Once again CPPR raised over \$50,000 and took up the fight to inform the public of yet another abuse of property rights and help defeat Prop. A.

Nefariously buried on page 3-13 in the proposed County General Plan Update that is scheduled to be approved by the board of supervisors later this year it is stated: "Four residential land use designations are applied within the Rural Lands regional category. The densities provided by these designations are the lowest in the unincorporated County ... ranging from one dwelling unit per 20 gross acres to one dwelling unit per 160 gross acres."

The government already owns over 50 percent of the land subject to the

General Plan. Another 7 percent (159,000 acres) is dedicated Open Space and Indian reservations account for about 5.7 percent (pg. 3.4). Dictating onerous restrictions on the 35.3 percent of still privately owned land was obviously unacceptable to the voters who rejected Propositions B and A.

The draft plan purports to only restrict 15 percent of the private property within the county. For landowners to restrict the "use" of private property 15 percent is economically no different from physically taking (stealing) 15 percent of their property without "just compensation" as required by the U.S. Constitution. Cynically, the General Plan fancies itself "the equivalent of a Constitution" (only without a Bill of Rights).

While judges can nullify election results with impunity it remains to be seen if county supervisors can get away with it, especially with Supervisors Horn and Roberts up for re-election this year. No doubt approval of this contentious General Plan will be postponed until after the Tea Parties and over 800 paid members of CPPR vote in November.

It's a shame the supervisors

have to resort to chicanery since it's highly unlikely that most of the lands taken by "Inverse Condemnation" would ever be developed to a noticeable degree within the next 100 years. Nonetheless, the supervisors feel compelled to step on the necks of landowners, nearly all of whom have preserved their rural lands in pristine condition for many years and a few for many generations since the late 1800s.

It's a shame because there are natural constraints and topography that already limit development on rural property. Furthermore, lack of gas, electric, and water render much of the backcountry undevelopable. Most of the rural lands will never be urbanized in our lifetimes. The General Plan Update even acknowledges these constraints. So why needlessly inflict economic losses on some landowners when the supervisors could easily leave existing rural zoning in place with legally, de minimis results and approve incentives for higher density zoning in core areas where desired?

Regarding core areas, why do government planners keep claiming it's cheaper to build in "core" areas with infrastructure in place? It isn't. "Congestifying" is

expensive. Apparently they've never examined development downtown where density is the highest and the cost to government, developers, homebuyers and property taxpayers are the greatest per square foot.

Rural development historically demands fewer government services, whether it's fire, sheriff, streets, parks or libraries. Furthermore it disproportionately generates higher property taxes and water availability charges per public services received. Rural residents tend to have fewer young children entering 13 years of schooling while expensive infrastructure is privately funded (wells and septic tanks), mainly off low-maintenance, two-lane country roads that require no traffic signals, sidewalks, curbs or gutters.

The supervisors' June 18, last minute farce to mollify opponents of the General Plan Update presented the Transfer of Development Rights concept. Theoretically property owners adversely impacted by the new General Plan can sell "their" prohibited development densities to others. This scam has been around for 30 years and the supervisors know full well

that it's rare for residents in any community agreeing to be recipients of higher density transfers, but on paper the idea sounds terrific. To their credit the county planners point out that only 20 of the 190 TDR plans nationally are considered successful.

With thousands of pages of planning, the supervisors, planners and property owners can't see the forest for the trees. However, even the dumbest among us know whenever you restrict the potential supply of residential land you raise the cost of housing for all income groups. After 38 years of growth controls and growth management, home prices in the San Diego MSA have skyrocketed from less than the national median in 1973 to double the national median. It's time the supervisors put an end to the county's land use mismanagement. They should disapprove any additional down zoning of rural lands and let their constituents live in harmony.

Schnaubelt, president of Citizens for Private Property Rights, has been a commercial real estate broker for 39 years and was a San Diego city councilman from 1977-81.

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Two days of events to celebrate dedication of Historic Highway 94

Historic highway dedication planned for late August

Highway 94 is officially a state historic route and organizers are now consulting with community and business members on where to place the distinctive signs that draw visitors and customers to historic stops.

The public is invited to a ribbon cutting and dedication planned for Saturday morning, August 28, starting at 9:00 AM, to be followed by a weekend of special events at businesses, communities, clubs and museums along the route. The ribbon cutting will be held at Simpson's Nursery

in Jamul.

The declaration project is a truly local effort. It was born when Rural Economic Action League Chairman Larry Johnson, the Historic Highway 80 organization and Jeanette Perez of the San Diego East Visitors Bureau teamed up with the Highway 94 Club to create a subcommittee of club and community members. Members then approached California Assemblyman Joel Anderson to introduce the declaration bill to the state legislature.

The declaration was vigorously supported by local businesses and District 2 Supervisor Dianne Jacob, as an economic

improvement initiative, and by local historians and museums, including the history related organization called CAREM in Tecate, Mx.

Much of the declaration's content is based on a book about the history of Highway 94 which was researched and written by Potrero resident Shirley Bowman Reider.

The resolution received final approval on June 2, 2010 and the subcommittee is currently seeking a funding source for official historic highway signage, while Highway 94 Club members are working on a plan for placement of the signs.

A less costly version of the signs will also be created for use by local venues that want to celebrate our history and encourage visitors to come and appreciate what our local businesses and museums have to offer.

Historic Highway 80, which sought and won its own declaration recently, and the San Diego Convention & Visitors Bureau, will partner with the Highway 94 Club Subcommittee in promoting Historic Highway 94 and in planning joint events, such as car and motorcycle tours.

Backcountry businesses, clubs and museums are urged to contact Carmen Sylva at 619-820-5708 or

Larry Johnson at 619-478-5566 to host a celebration weekend event. Businesses and museums that are interested in placing private sector signs may call Jerry Yops at 619-766-9336.

A flyer with information about the dedication events and participating venues will be available in early August.

Note: REAL members come from all the communities of the Mountain Empire and are united in seeking an economic vision that helps to stabilize local property values and that fosters successful businesses and sustainable community services.

A Day To Remember

When I worked at the Mountain Health Center then located on the Campo Indian Reservation, I met John Finn and his wife and came to know them. One day he surprised us and brought in his Medal of Honor to show us.

This was so moving as I never had known anyone who had received this honor or even seen this medal. In his humble way, he briefly told us about what happened that day on Pearl Harbor. My mind reflected back to that day and as a teenager, the story came alive again when we heard the news on the radio and my brother who was serving in the army, left immediately to return to Fort Leonard Wood. The lives of

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