

Staples Ranch project hits snag, decision delayed until August

Pleasanton project would include auto mall, senior housing, ice rink and more.

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PLEASANTON — The long awaited Staples Ranch project on the east side of town has hit another snag, with a Tuesday night decision delaying discussion until late summer.

The city council continued a decision on environmental documents related to the project until a special Aug. 24 meeting, upsetting a room packed with residents hoping to move into a senior community that is part of the project just west of El Charro Road.

City Manager Nelson Fialho said the delay was due to the city missing a 10-day notification period agreed upon as part of settlement with environmental groups who sued over the plans.

"We did not meet our side of the agreement," said Fialho, who said the city missed the deadline by a day.

Staples Ranch, as proposed, includes plans for a 37-acre auto mall, a 45-acre senior continuing care community, 11 acres of retail, a 17-acre community park, including a 7-acre ice-skating facility; and a 5-acre neighborhood park with a water detention basin.

Environmental groups led by the Alameda Creek Alliance sued the city in March 2009. They claimed the environmental impact report for the project failed to analyze the effects of the Stoneridge Drive road extension project, which was not part of the original plan, would have on surrounding wildlife and habitat and residential neighborhoods.

As part of a settlement, the city agreed to complete a supplemental environmental impact report for the extension and to hold off its construction until the report was complete. The agreement called for a 10-day notice of public meetings related to the project.

The environmental documents the council was expected to vote on included plans for two sound walls, noise reducing pavement and mitigation for a rare plant species, the , San Joaquin Spearscale.

Mayor Jennifer Hosterman tried and failed to gain council support to hear not only the environmental documents but the development plans and agreements for the entire project at the Aug. 24 meeting.

"I think the time has come to deal with the issues," Hosterman said. "We need to either vote them up or down."

Other council members had concerns about whether all the issues could be covered in one meeting. Instead, the council will start to hear the development plans at its Sept. 7 meeting. Approval of plans from Hendrick Automotive Group, Continuing Life Communities LLC and the neighborhood park that includes the ice rink were expected this summer.

"This project has undergone intense scrutiny and many hearings," said Patti Baer, a resident since 1968 who is hoping to move into the senior community with her husband. "It's time for you to take positive action."

Nearly a thousand residents have put down deposits to move into the senior community, said Troy Bourne, vice president of Continuing Life Communities LLC.

"The plan called for our project to receive final approval in May of 2006, that was four years ago," Bourne said. "... As approvals have been delayed many seniors that had hoped to stay in Pleasanton have been forced to make other plans."

The Staples Ranch property is owned by Alameda County. Once development projects are approved, the land will be annexed into the city.