



ANGWIN

Angwin land dispute remains unresolved

Mediator meeting with college and neighbors

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Napa County, Pacific Union College and Save Rural Angwin have yet to meet and discuss brokering a compromise on a land-use dispute in the Upvalley community of Angwin.

County officials told the college and the conservation group last year they were willing to help mediate the dispute, which spilled out countywide through an emotionally charged fight over a November ballot initiative, Measure U. They proposed a compromise committee, with Supervisors Bill Dodd and Diane Dillon from the county, and members of Save Rural Angwin and PUC.

While the parties have been meeting on a one-on-one basis with a professional mediator in the last month, no formal meetings have taken place, Dillon said Friday.

Save Rural Angwin Chairman Mike Hackett said he was pessimistic that a fruitful dialogue could take place.

“We’re very pessimistic that the college would be interested in it at all,” Hackett said in an interview Friday. “A lot of good can come out of dialogue, but only if people are willing to be honest and open.”

PUC President Heather Knight and Vice President John Collins did not return phone calls seeking comment Friday.

Dillon said she wouldn’t diminish the prospects of a mediated compromise so quickly.

“I wouldn’t call it an impasse because we haven’t even started talking,” Dillon said. “This is a new phase of things.”

The dispute traces back to a failed development proposal called the eco-village, in which the college planned to sell land in Angwin to a developer who would use it to build a housing development. That proposal was scuttled, however, and the application was withdrawn last year.

After the college again pursued selling some of its land — possibly to the same developer behind the eco-village proposal — Save Rural Angwin introduced Measure U, which would have downzoned three parcels the college owns that are designated urban-residential in the county’s General Plan. The Measure U parcels were also involved in the eco-village plans.

The college has not commented on the status of the potential land sale since the election.

Save Rural Angwin raised more than \$100,000 in its campaign, which argued the intent of Measure U was to keep these parcels free of any future housing developments. PUC fought back by spending almost a half-million dollars in a campaign that argued that Measure U was an unfair infringement of its property rights. Voters rejected the initiative, 60 percent to 40 percent.

Hackett said his group's preference is for the Board of Supervisors to resolve the land-use issues now.

In 2009, when the eco-village proposal was still alive, the board restricted the residential development potential within Angwin's urban bubble. But it delayed until 2010 any decision on the 63 acres involved with the eco-village, and has yet to take up the item. It's designated as an "action item" in the county's general plan.

Save Rural Angwin fears the board won't hear the matter until there's a development application, similar to the process that the General Plan and zoning amendment changes to the former Napa Pipe site south of Napa have taken.

"The supervisors need the political courage to deal with the land-use designations now," Hackett said.

He also contends county action would provide Save Rural Angwin the victory that eluded it in the last election.

"What we believe is that the General Plan will protect and preserve the rural nature of Angwin," Hackett said. "I believe right now we have the majority of the board in our camp. I think they should deal with this."

Dillon said the timing isn't right, considering that the county is still actively involved in litigation from an affordable housing group, Latinos Unidos del Valle de Napa y Solano.

That case is on appeal, as the county and the group recently finished filing their briefs. Two urban-residential parcels in Angwin have been approved for 191 homes and were part of that case. Measure U would not have affected those.

"I know that we are all committed to following through on all of the General Plan actions," Dillon said.

She acknowledged that the deadline of June 2010 for the action item has long since lapsed, but said the board's inaction is a matter of changing circumstances.

"Things change," Dillon said. "That's not to say we're never going to do it."