

County willing to mediate Angwin land dispute

Committee floated to hammer out differences

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Getting a compromise on land-use issues in Angwin may be difficult following an emotional, hotly contested election that ended in Measure U's defeat, but Napa County Supervisor Diane Dillon said she's willing to try.

Dillon said she and Napa County Planning Director Hillary Gitelman will attempt to sit down with members of Save Rural Angwin and Pacific Union College next year and broker an agreement between the two and end their lengthy dispute, which culminated in Measure U.

Dillon was trying to get a similar "compromise committee" set up earlier this year in the spring, but Save Rural Angwin began gathering signatures to get Measure U on ballots, so she dropped the effort.

Measure U, if it had passed, would have downzoned three parcels of land in Angwin that the college owns, with the intent of keeping future housing developments out of the small community. It failed at the polls in November, garnering only 40 percent approval.

"We were just starting to do that and the initiative was filed," Dillon said. "That put a halt to all that. We're restarting that effort to have a discussion."

Save Rural Angwin Chairman Mike Hackett said his group would be willing to talk, so long as the talks won't involve compromising its principles, but it also wants the committee to be open and transparent. Hackett said the county's committee isn't intended to be open to the public.

"We won't do it unless it's transparent," Hackett said. "We are always, always open to dialogue. Ultimately, it cannot be a secret."

PUC President Heather Knight and Vice President John Collins did not return phone calls seeking comment on the committee, although Collins expressed a desire to find compromise with Save Rural Angwin after the election.

Hackett said his group's concern has always been that the college will sell some of its land to a developer, and wants PUC to be more open about its intents regarding the sale.

In the past, Collins and Knight have declined to discuss the status of the land sale, citing confidentiality requirements, but say they're committed to being good stewards.

"I would love to think a dialogue could take place," Hackett said. "Until the college is open and honest we won't get anywhere. We would be clearly in opposition to keeping anything secret."