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Decision on Deer Hill Road Reclassification Delayed

By Cathy Tyson

Due to the late hour - discussion of the Deer Hill Road agenda item did not start until after 10:15 p.m. at the last meeting of the Lafayette City Council - Council members agreed that they wanted to increase participation, so some public testimony was taken but the opportunity for more public input and a final decision on this matter was put off until the Council's next meeting on February 8th.

At issue is re-classifying a number of parcels along Deer Hill Road and Pleasant Hill Road. Residents are especially concerned with changing the designation of the flat area at the intersection across from the gas station on Pleasant Hill Road, known as the Christmas tree lot. Even though the City Council is considering lowering the density from Administrative/Professional/Office/Multifamily - a maximum of 35 dwelling units per acre, to Low Density Multi-family Residential - 17 dwelling units per acre, some residents would prefer nothing ever be built there.

The updated General Plan of 2002 recognized the importance of this parcel because of its high visibility, open hillsides and as a gateway to the community. Many residents commented at the January 25th City Council meeting that they are concerned about additional traffic that development would bring at one of the busiest intersections in the city. "This is the only way residents from northeast Lafayette get to the freeway," said Guy Atwood. "It's really a choke point."

"Whatever is permitted is too many," said the President of the Springhill Valley Association, "there's no way to manage traffic into and out of this parcel."

"I am completely against high density housing," said Christina Zimmerman. But when prompted by Council Members about what would be the best development at that location, she said, "I don't know what would be appropriate there."

The process that started in April of 2001 with a recommendation by the Planning Commission still hasn't been finalized - but it looks like the end is near. A decision is expected at the February 8th City Council meeting.

Reach the reporter at: cathy@lamorindaweekly.com

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