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Homes at Deer Hill Review Continues

By Cathy Tyson

The review process for The Homes at Deer Hill marches slowly on. At a recent Lafayette City Council meeting, traffic analysis, circulation, as well as air quality and school impacts were discussed. Dates were set for future components of the proposed 44-home project near Acalanes High School to be reviewed: one more in July and two in early August.

At the July 6 meeting, applicant O'Brien Land Company had experts responding to specific questions that were brought up by the city council, along with the city engineer and a representative from the Lafayette School District, and, of course, public testimony was given.

Steve Noack and Steve Bush of PlaceWorks addressed air quality impacts from the construction process itself and proximity to Highway 24, along with construction dust mitigation measures, and Rich Haygood of TJKM, a transportation consultant, explained traffic impacts.

Residents' exposure level is measured conservatively high, said Noack, measured over a 70-year period, where someone is outside every day. Mitigation measures to reduce impacts to a less than significant level include: standard best management practices on airborne particulates and dust during construction; using state-of-the-art heavy equipment on the construction of the project; and finally having on-site residents replace the maximum efficiency filters on HVAC every three months - the manufacturers' suggested schedule. Calculations included the impact of construction activity and the site being subject to existing pollutants from Highway 24 and Pleasant Hill Road. During the construction phase, the applicant will be actively monitoring the air.

Concerns also centered around the proposed roundabout at the entrance, whether it's feasible or not, and which option - a roundabout or traffic light at the intersection - would deliver the best level of service and safety at that location. The slope of the hill, along with the speed of vehicles, factors into the ultimate selection.

Questions also lingered around the drop-off area. "There's always uncertainty about how people are going to behave despite our best intentions," said Council Member Don Tatzin. Council Member Mike Anderson pressed to get feasibility information about a roundabout sooner rather than later.

Distribution of guest parking within the project also came up.

The July 27 meeting is slated to cover parks facilities, site design and architecture, and the applicant's reclaimed irrigation water strategy. A special meeting is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 8 to review the development agreement, and review findings necessary to approve or deny the project, and conditions of approval if appropriate. A final public hearing is slated for the city council's regular Aug. 10 meeting.

City council members agreed that if residents were out of town for the Fourth of July holiday and missed the July 6 meeting, they are still welcome to comment on topics that were discussed at the July 27 meeting.

To see all the questions and answers prepared for this meeting, or to listen to the over-three-hour audio version, simply go to www.lovelafayette.org and click on the July 6 city council meeting.

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