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Saranap factions come together to plan future

By John T. Miller



Image provided

In a move that would have been unheard of just a short time ago, members of disparate groups of the Saranap area came together to work toward future development plans that would be satisfying to all.

Supervisor Candace Andersen held a meeting attended by approximately 60 residents to find out what they envisioned as the future of the Saranap Avenue/Boulevard Way area last Monday night at Parkmead Elementary.

More importantly, on the Saturday evening prior to the meeting, individuals representing the Saranap Homeowner's Organization (SHO), the Saranap Community Association (SCA), and Sufism Reoriented met at the home of Niroop Srivatsa to find common ground after nearly 10 years of contentious planning issues polarized many in the neighborhood.

According to David Dacus, president of SCA, the pre-meeting was the idea of Srivatsa. Although she is head of planning for the city of Lafayette, her main motive for calling the meeting was as a member of the Saranap community to get members of the different groups to come together and find common ground.

Tim Lynch, president of SHO, said, "After 10 years of not really communicating, it was nice to sit down in the same room and plan for the future as a community."

One of the main points that came from the pre-meeting was an objection to the county's use of the words "Downtown Saranap" as being too directional for the public meeting. In a letter to Andersen, Lynch and Dacus asked that a new title be considered, and their suggestion resulted in a title of "Saranap Avenue/Boulevard Way Planning Process."

According to the county website, "The Saranap Ave/Boulevard Way Planning Process is a community engagement process to create a planning document that reflects the community's vision for the future of this area."

Supervisor Andersen said she was delighted that so many people came to Monday's meeting and were so engaged in talking about the future of Saranap. "For a community that was so divided, it's nice to see them all on one page wanting what's best for the area."

After a presentation from members of the County Planning Department about what sort of planning tools, elements, and goals could be considered, along with attempting to describe the geographic scope of the area, the staff took questions, suggestions and comments from the participants.

Each of the five staff members from the County Planning staff and the Department of Conservation and Development then headed a breakout group for additional discussion and questions. A survey was available to rank the types of goals, amenities, elements and land use types that residents would like to see in the future.

According to Andersen, the next step would be to "percolate the survey and get additional feedback and present the findings to the community at the next meeting." She also mentioned reaching out to the current property owners along Boulevard Way to hear what they might like to see in the future and continuing to look into funding sources: "If the community wants a park, what kind do they want and how will it be funded and maintained?"

What the community and the county don't want is five years of fighting over each new project. "We would like the outcome to be a consensus from the neighborhood, a set of rules that we can show to the County staff when they're asked to approve these sorts of things," said Dacus.

Since there are no current applications for anything in the area at the moment, there is no sense of urgency as these meetings continue.

For those members of the community wishing to fill out a survey to let their wishes be known, they can find it at www.cccounty.us/PlanSaranap.

Reach the reporter at: john@lamorindaweekly.com

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