

CITY WARY ABOUT HIGHLANDS

By Daniel Witter/Appeal-Democrat

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Marysville officials reiterated their concerns Thursday about how the Yuba Highlands project could impact the city.

During a Marysville City/ Yuba County Liaison Committee meeting, city Councilman Ben Wirtschafter said the project's environmental impact report has problems that must be addressed.

"Our concerns are what's in the environmental documents," said City Administrator Steve Casey, echoing Wirtschafter's comments but adding that the city isn't for or against the project.

In November, city officials said the EIR includes confusing references to Yuba County traffic mitigation fees being tied to Marysville transportation improvements. The EIR also uses outdated traffic count information, they said.

The report also fails to adequately address affordable housing needs, city officials said.

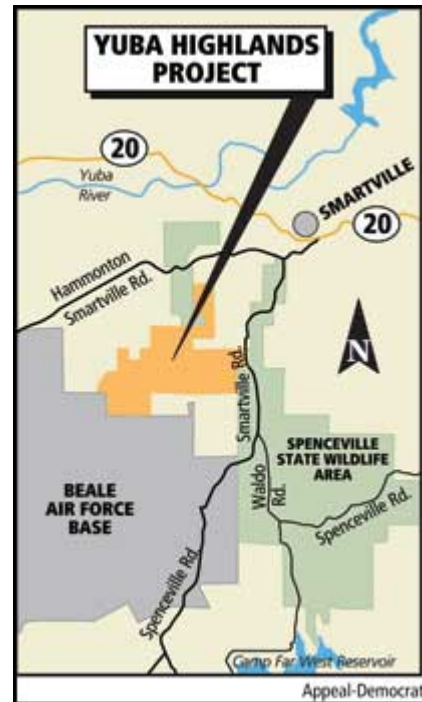
After several public hearings, the county Planning Commission in January certified the EIR for the proposed 5,100-home subdivision.

The project, northeast of Beale Air Force Base, is under appeal by attorneys James Pachl and William Kopper. The Yuba County Board of Supervisors will consider the appeals May 15, said Kevin Mallen, director of the county's Community Development and Services Agency.

City officials said Thursday they were surprised the final EIR was certified by the Planning Commission instead of the supervisors. Mallen said legal counsel told him the county's process of EIR certification does not violate state laws.

City officials wanted to know why the county isn't holding off on the entire project until the Beale Air Force Base Joint Land Use Study is finished.

"I don't know the answer to that," replied Supervisor Mary Jane Griego. She wasn't opposed to waiting until the study is completed.



The JLUS is a state-sponsored study to look at potential land use conflicts between the base and surrounding community and will make recommendations to ease potential conflicts.

County Administrator Robert Bendorf said the project will be ready for supervisors to consider long before the JLUS final report comes out.

While JLUS committees have held useful meetings and discussed different issues, the discussions have not progressed to specific land use recommendations, he said.

"The discussion has been very general," Bendorf said. "It's got a ways to go."

The draft report from the JLUS study won't be released for quite a while, Bendorf said.

Caltrans also has concerns about Yuba Highlands.

In a Feb. 21 letter, Wayne Lewis, Caltrans' deputy director for District 3, urged the Planning Commission to reject the project.

"We do not believe the commission can make an informed decision without a more current traffic analysis," Lewis wrote. "An updated traffic analysis will help ensure that mobility on the state highways and throughout Yuba County are not compromised unnecessarily by growth."

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