

April Jacobs

From: Stacy Fortner <s_fortner@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 7, 2021 5:37 PM
To: April Jacobs
Subject: Opposed to Facilities District in Spring Canyon Agenda Item 6.1 - THIS ALSO APPLIES TO TESORO on Agenda Item 6.2

CAUTION - EXTERNAL SENDER

Why is a water agency helping a developer build in a very high fire hazard zone?

The explosive Lake Fire that started Aug. 12, 2020 rapidly increased in size, burning through 10,000 acres of brush in just a few hours in what firefighters termed “extreme” fire behavior. This occurred without Santa Ana winds and temps in the 90s.

It was among three other fires that started in L.A. County that day, and one of many that have already occurred in our area since June. But it seems our public agencies are still more concerned about promoting development than making sure the people who live in the area or in the future housing projects are safe.

Cities and counties routinely approve housing in very high fire hazard areas without ensuring adequate evacuation routes. Both local environmental groups, Santa Clarita Organization for Planning and the Environment and the Sierra Club, made these objections during the 2006 Lyons Canyon Ranch hearings and for Lennar’s Pico Canyon project, to no avail. Major fires had already occurred in those areas, but these projects, both in very high fire hazard zones, were ushered through the process with little discussion about the danger of adding more residents and more potential for humans to start fires in the area.

According to Cal Fire, 95% of fires are human-caused and a large majority occur along roadways. The frequency and size of these fires far outstrips the natural chaparral fire regime, which used to have a burn rate from lightning strikes of every 30 to 150 years. The frequency of fires now means that wildlife can’t recover and people are losing their homes and sometimes their lives at a much higher rate than ever before. It is also costing Californians billions of their taxpayer dollars to fight them.

While planning departments are starting to require fire “hardening” features in home building codes, and brush clearance around houses in fire hazard zones is already a standard requirement, this will not save homes or wildlife in Santa Ana wind-driven fires, as everyone knows. So residents should be sure they can afford the enormous and ever-increasing costs of insuring their homes when buying in a fire hazard zone.

Knowing all this, I was surprised by the efforts made even by our water agency to promote development of the Spring Canyon project on the outskirts of our city in a very high fire hazard zone off Soledad Canyon Road. With limited evacuation under the freeway or through an existing neighborhood, moving people out of harm's way will be a nightmare.

And the very high fire hazard area zoning for this parcel has already proved correct. A huge wind-driven fire burned across the property two years ago, exactly in the area where housing is to be built, and the Tick Fire scorched neighboring acreage last year. Their own facilities were threatened and shut off in the Edison public safety shut-off that occurred in the area. It is not as if they aren't aware of the problem.

The school district, unhappy with the location of the school or perhaps because no elementary school at all will be built for the first 200 units, refused to create a community facilities district, so the developer asked the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency to create it for them.

A community facilities district, or "Mello-Roos" district, as it is usually called, puts the cost of building facilities such as schools or other infrastructure on the future homeowners in the form of an additional property tax on top of what they would normally pay. They often get a huge surprise when their tax bill arrives. Additionally, Mello-Roos taxes are often not even tax-deductible because they are not based on the value of the home.

After spending money on staff time and attorneys on behalf of this developer, the water agency board came up with a policy to help the developer create this Mello-Roos district at its February meeting and may give its final approval in the next few months.

Should your water agency be creating Mello-Roos districts to support developments, especially one in a fire hazard area? Is this how you want them to be spending your water rate dollars? This is a HUGE TAX BURDEN on future residents and you cannot finance your taxes. Not to mention insurance companies are not writing policies in these areas leaving home buyers little options when protecting their homes.

I AM OPPOSED TO THIS!

Stacy Fortner

Blessings,
Stacy Fortner