

February 10, 2010
Agenda Item 11c

**Danville-San Ramon
agreement regarding
Tassajara Valley
development possible**

By Eric Louie
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 01/13/2010 04:22:23 PM PST

Updated: 01/13/2010 04:22:24 PM PST

Danville and San Ramon may have an agreement in their dispute over who will oversee development in the Tassajara Valley.

On Tuesday, the Danville Town Council voted 5-0 to approve what officials said was an agreement on each side's sphere of influence, the area marked for annexation. The designation gives a town limited authority over development before annexation.

"It represents a reasonable compromise," said Danville Mayor Newell Arnerich, who attended meetings with San Ramon and Contra Costa County officials to discuss the issue.

San Ramon Mayor Abram Wilson said Wednesday his city's council could discuss the possible agreement during its Jan. 26 meeting. He did not want to say if it would be supported by the council, saying not all members have seen it.

The Tassajara Valley is east of San Ramon and southeast of Danville.

In September, the Contra Costa Local Agency Formation Commission rejected San Ramon's

request that a substantial piece of Tassajara be immediately put into its sphere of influence and accepted Danville's request for more discussion and negotiation.

Danville Town Manager Joe Calabrigo said the agreement is scaled back two-thirds from each side's original proposal, and leaves at least half of the Tassajara Valley outside either's sphere. He said Danville brought its sphere proposal in response to San Ramon's because Danville wants to keep a buffer of undeveloped land between the two towns.

He said traffic congestion and issues in one municipality would affect the other. He said Danville's original sphere proposal went south to Highland Road, but was then moved farther north, giving San Ramon the area. In exchange, he said the area east of Camino Tassajara is in neither's sphere.

Danville's council meeting had included many questions about development possibilities in San Ramon that could affect Danville.

Wilson, who was at his own council meeting Tuesday, said San Ramon is not trying to immediately develop the area, but wants to have a part, pointing to how the Dougherty Valley was approved by the county with little input from San Ramon.

Wilson noted any development would have to be approved by San Ramon voters, which is not the case in Danville or the county.

Calabrigo said the spheres would have to be approved by the Contra Costa Local Agency Formation Commission, but their process would include many steps including environmental reviews before that is done. Both Danville and San Ramon are also updating their general plans.

Contact Eric Louie at 925-847-2123.

East County Datebook

East County Times

Posted: 01/20/2010 01:09:56 PM PST

Updated: 01/20/2010 01:09:56 PM PST
Class/workshops

Contra Costa LAFCO Fire Workshop: 8:30 a.m.-noon Feb. 3. Bringing stakeholders together to explore ideas relating to fire service effectiveness, sustainability and local governance. All interested welcome. Martinez City Hall, council chambers, 525 Henrietta St. Lou Ann Texeira, 925-335-1094.

Events

Early Bird Weekend Tax Assistance — 6 p.m. Jan. 22 and 10 a.m. Jan. 23. If your income is \$52,000 or less, you can e-file your 2009 federal and state tax returns for free and get your refund fast. Must be 18 or older. Saturday session includes Spanish translation. Opportunity Junction, 3102 Delta Fair Blvd., Antioch. 925-776-1133. Registration: www.opportunityjunction.org/taxes.

Delta Informal Gardeners — 7:30-9:30 p.m. Jan. 25. Program: Andrew Price, community affairs representative of the Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District. New members and guests welcome. Brentwood United Methodist Church, social hall, 890 Second St. Jon Bergstrom, 925-240-6060, www.deltainformalgardeners.org.

Bethel Island Senior Health and Information Fair — 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Jan. 26. Free screenings, health information, social services information and more. Refreshments served. Scout Hall, 3090 Ranch Lane.

For information or transportation needs, call Harriett, 925-625-0646.

Manzanita — 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Jan. 30. Learn about manzanita, one of our early bloomers and most attractive shrubs, as you hike the lower Chaparral Trail. Must be 8 or older. Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, 5175 Somersville Road, Antioch. Meet at the south end parking lot on Somersville Road. Free. 510-544-2750 or e-mail bdvisit@ebparks.org.

"The Sky Tonight" — 7 p.m. Jan. 29. A 60-minute program featuring current sky events, stories of constellations, views of planets, galaxies and more. Sponsored by the Los Medanos College Planetarium, 2700 E. Leland Drive, Pittsburg. \$2 per person. Cash only. No seating after show begins. 925-439-2181, ext. 800 or www.losmedanos.edu/astro.

Military Families Meet and Greet — 6:30-9:30 p.m. Jan. 29. An open house and dinner for those who are involved in or would like to be involved in supporting our military troops in a variety of ways. Share your ideas, volunteer, donate and meet the families of those supporting our country. Community Presbyterian Church, social hall, 200 E. Leland Road, Pittsburg. Josie Monaghan, 925-642-7537 or www.antiochmilitary.com.

Local Author Book Signing — Noon-2 p.m. Jan. 30. Local author, Norma Lou Johnson, will be available to discuss and autograph her newly released book, "From Visions of Grandeur to Depths of Despair," an account of living through and understanding the nightmare of mental illness. Graceland Christian Books, 4261 Century Blvd., Pittsburg. 925-757-1922 or e-mail loisnormajohnson@yahoo.com.

Book Signing Event — 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Jan. 30. Local author Paulette Harper will be available to sign

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San Ramon to discuss sphere of influence in Tassajara Valley

By **Sophia Kazmi**
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 01/23/2010 04:43:51 PM PST

Updated: 01/23/2010 07:02:51 PM PST
SAN RAMON — Now it's San Ramon's turn.

Two weeks after Danville's Town Council unanimously approved a proposal to amend its sphere of influence in the Tassajara Valley, San Ramon will consider doing the same Tuesday night.

San Ramon's proposed sphere of influence is the strip of valley west of Camino Tassajara east of the city limit, north of the Alameda-Contra Costa County line and south of Penny Lane. Danville's proposed sphere of influence, an area marked for annexation, is north of San Ramon's proposed sphere and north and east of Blackhawk.

Under the proposed plan, about half of Tassajara Valley remains outside of Danville's or San Ramon's control. The plans have to be approved by Contra Costa County's Local Agency Formation Commission.

In September, San Ramon had asked the commission for a large chunk of the Tassajara Valley to be put under its sphere of influence. Danville had asked for more time, as town officials were concerned about proposed traffic from any new development planned and wanted a buffer. The commission agreed to delay a decision giving time

for discussion. Both municipalities met with Contra Costa County Supervisor Mary Piepho and others to work out a solution. The compromise is what San Ramon will review Tuesday night.

San Ramon cannot approve any development in the Tassajara Valley until a zoning plan for the area — which requires traffic and environmental studies — is completed and approved by San Ramon voters.

Those voters will take up the issue of an urban limit line this year.

Under the county voter-approved growth boundary, no development may take place in the Tassajara Valley until at least 2026.

San Ramon city officials have said they want control over the area to prevent another situation similar to what happened in Dougherty Valley, where more homes were built than the city wanted.

San Ramon caused a stir in 2008 when it wanted control of the entire 4,900 acres in Tassajara Valley. That application was deferred after the commission said the documents San Ramon submitted did not adequately address the impacts of future development.

Since 2008, a rural mixed-used development in the area has been filed with the county and an application for a cemetery pending.

Staff writer Eric Louie contributed to this story. Contact Sophia Kazmi at 925-847-2122. Follow her at [Twitter.com/sophiakazmi](https://twitter.com/sophiakazmi)

If you're goING WHAT: San Ramon City Council

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CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

meeting WHEN: 7 p.m. Tuesday WHERE: City Council chamber, 2222 Camino Ramon

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Tassajara Valley development will test urban limit line

By Lisa Vorderbrueggen
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 01/23/2010 05:00:00 PM PST

Updated: 01/23/2010 05:40:04 PM PST

IN THE WEE HOURS of the morning in 2004, exhausted Contra Costa elected leaders took an extraordinary leap and tied road repair dollars to compliance with an urban growth boundary.

Voters enthusiastically endorsed the sprawl-busting provision the following November as part of Measure J.

Six years later, the unprecedented link is facing its first major challenge.

The test case is New Farm, a development proposal for 771 acres outside the urban limit line in the unincorporated Tassajara Valley area east of Danville and San Ramon.

The landowners — the principle is former Jordanian transportation minister Samir Kawar — propose to amend the county general plan to allow the construction of about 180 homes along with irrigated orchards and vegetable farms.

Here is where Measure J enters the picture.

Save Mount Diablo, the veteran Contra Costa land preservation group, wants the Contra Costa

Transportation Authority to issue a legal opinion as to whether county approval of New Farm would violate the urban limit line.

If the answer is yes, under Measure J, the county would lose its share of transportation sales taxes, about \$2 million a year.

It's a clear-cut case of sprawl, says Save Mount Diablo director Ron Brown: New Farm would punch a hole in the growth boundary with the extension of urban services such as sewer and water.

Last week, the authority declined Save Mount Diablo's request, calling it premature to involve itself in a project that may never be approved.

Granted, the authority's compliance paperwork is retroactive. It calls for jurisdictions to submit each year a report based on their actions of the prior year.

The checklist includes this question: "Has the local jurisdiction adopted and continually adhered to the provisions of a voter-approved urban limit line?"

If the authority deems a jurisdiction to be in violation, it can withhold transportation dollars.

The immediate problem is that six years after voters passed Measure J, the authority has still not defined in writing what compliance means. It expects to adopt its official language this spring.

In 2004, folks asked for clarification but they backed down when they realized that a fight over a hard-and-fast definition could shatter the fragile proposal.

It won't be easy.

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The prospect of a transportation planning body making a prior judgment on a land-use proposal carries major political and legal complexities.

The authority board is comprised of county and city elected officials, the same people who seek favorable compliance rulings from their colleagues in return for much-needed transportation dollars.

And as we have seen in the lengthy debate over urban limit lines, people have widely disparate philosophies about what constitutes compliance.

This is a gross oversimplification — it is in no way intended to replace a \$500-an-hour land-use attorney — but here's an illustration of the compliance dilemma.

Under state law, a county or city cannot approve a project that is inconsistent with its general plan. The urban limit line is a major component of the county's general plan.

Thus, if the county approves New Farm, it must adopt findings that the project conforms with its general plan.

Hence, using this logic, an approval of New Farm would not violate the urban limit line and the county would get its money.

It's unlikely that voters had this trajectory in mind, says authority member and Pleasant Hill Councilman David Durant. He was among the leaders who wrangled into the early hours in 2004 over the language.

"Whether I like it or not — and I wasn't a huge fan of this — this is how we sold it to the voters," Durant

said. "If the authority doesn't exercise judgment, we will have left voters with the false impression that Measure J would help contain growth within the urban limit line."

GOT POLITICS? Read the Political Blotter at www.ibabuzz.com/politics.

AND FINALLY. I have great readers who send me stuff including a link to Cosmopolitan magazine's Web site where you can see the 1982 nearly-nude pictures of Sen.-elect Scott Brown, R-Mass.

My goodness. And here I thought Cosmo was just a place to find out the latest advance in mascara technology.

But the link got us to talking here in the newsroom about which of our local elected officials we never want to see nekked.

I won't bore you with names but suffice to say, it's a long list.

Contact Lisa Vorderbrueggen at lvorderbrueggen@bayareanewsgroup.com or 925-945-4773 or IBABuzz.com/politics.

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Moraga-Orinda fire services still hot topic

By Jonathan Morales
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 01/27/2010 12:26:18 PM PST

Updated: 01/27/2010 12:26:18 PM PST

ORINDA — No major decisions about fire service studies have been made, but the continued discussion about a resident group's proposal gave council members the chance to clarify the next steps and to hear again from the public about it.

A residents' group, Fire and Infrastructure Renewal, or FAIR, says the city could save \$65 million over 12 years for road, drain and water pipe repairs by detaching from the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, redirecting property tax revenue to the city and contracting with the county fire department.

Few disagree the city should look further at the issue, including vetting FAIR's money claims. But differences remain on how quickly such a study should begin.

Also up in the air is whether the three agencies involved — Orinda, Moraga and the fire district — are willing to pay for an independent consultant to lead that study.

The two councils and the fire board plan to meet March 3 to discuss the scope of the study. Then a subcommittee of representatives from each agency, and potentially members of the public, would dive into the issue.

Council members were open to hiring a consultant, but said they hope Moraga and the fire district would help shoulder the cost.

The council directed staff to seek input from Moraga and the fire district on specific topics to be addressed at the March 3 meeting. Mayor Tom McCormick and Councilwoman Amy Worth, Orinda's appointees to the subcommittee, also will provide input.

FAIR members and supporters say the city should start looking at FAIR's claims now. Some of them are skeptical about Moraga and the fire district's interest in studying the issue or hiring a consultant.

Others, however, asked the council to take a more cautious approach.

"I would urge you to move, yes, but not to rush," said Carl Weber, who was involved in the committee that led to the formation of the Moraga-Orinda district.

The fire district will hold a question-and-answer session with FAIR at its Feb. 3 meeting. Fire Chief Randy Bradley said the board hasn't determined how best to move forward, since the proposal hasn't been formally presented to them yet.

"We want to have the Tri-Agency meeting. We want to get together with the FAIR group and have them answer the questions that we're going to provide in advance, and I think then the board will decide a path forward," he said.

Several residents at last week's Orinda City Council meeting said a study of fire service costs would be too complex for staff and council members to tackle by themselves.

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"You need the help of a consultant," said Bill Judge.

Also looming are concerns by some that the Local Agency Formation Commission, which regulates special districts such as the fire district, could annex the district into the county department. That would send the property tax dollars FAIR is eyeing for infrastructure repair to the county, not to Orinda.

Members of FAIR have said LAFCO officials have assured them they aren't planning such a move.

But Vice Mayor Victoria Smith pointed to a report earlier this month by the county administrator to the board of supervisors that suggests fire district consolidation could be on the way.

That report says LAFCO and several fire districts in the county are considering moves that could reduce fire agencies in the county to three — San Ramon, Richmond and the county department.

Contact Jonathan Morales at 925-943-8048.
Read the Lamorinda Sun blog at www.ibabuzz.com/lamorindasun.

background

Last year, Orinda's Revenue Enhancement Task Force determined that redirecting property tax revenue from the Moraga-Orinda Fire District to the city could potentially pay for local infrastructure repair. A subcommittee of council members from Orinda and Moraga, plus fire board members, was convened to look into that issue, as well as the claim that Orinda residents paid more for fire service than Moraga residents.

Subcommittee members from Orinda reported to the council that redirecting tax dollars was not feasible

and that funding between the two cities was equitable. Several council members remained open to studying the issue further, but the issue was tabled.

Some residents who believe Orinda continues to pay more for fire service formed FAIR and began to study fire service costs. They say the city could save \$65 million over 12 years by detaching from the fire district and contracting with the county.

Fire Chief Randy Bradley has said he is open to hearing FAIR's arguments, but has doubts about the group's assumptions about the cost of contracting with the county.

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Friday, January 29, 2010

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Talking about Oakley and East County

January 29, 2010

[The Urban Limit Line](#)

Posted by Kevin under [City Info](#)

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Mankind has been migrating to the suburbs forever. The modern notion of suburbs — a community in an outlying section of a city — was found to be evident as early as the 6th century BC in Babylon. In ancient Greece, the economic interdependence between the city and the agricultural communities surrounding it was given political definition by the formation of the city-state.

Cicero, the 1st century Roman orator and statesmen, refers to suburbanii; large country estates just outside Rome. In England, the rich who owned weekend villas outside London gradually transferred their main residences there and the middle class soon followed. By the middle of the 19th century, the exodus of population from metropolitan London confirmed the popular preference for suburban living.

Leaping across the Atlantic, the first steam ferry linked Brooklyn and Manhattan with viable transportation, making Brooklyn America's first suburb in 1814. The advent of the ferry allowed the residents of Brooklyn, many whom worked in Manhattan, to escape the city center and gave birth to a commuting suburb.

Still, at the beginning of the 20th century the United States was predominately a rural nation. However, events were in motion to change that fact. Mechanization in agriculture, the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl years triggered the first mass migration of the rural poor to the cities.

In the decades following World War II the population of the United States underwent a second mass migration, this time from the cities to the suburbs. American troops returned home after the war to start new lives and begin new families. Home building had been at a standstill before and during the war causing an extreme housing shortage. Between 1946 and 1964, 76.4 million babies were born. One might say, the baby boom stimulated the housing boom. In any event, over 13 million homes went up from 1948 to 1958, about a house every minute. Most of these new homes were affordable, cookie-cutter houses fashioned after the successful developments of William J Levitt.

Levitt bought thousands of acres of land outside the cities of New York and Philadelphia and created planned communities called Levittown during the 40's and 50's. The first such Levittown, comprising a total of 17,500 houses, was built on what had been a Long Island, New York potato farm. Subsequent developments in Bucks County, Pennsylvania and Florida soon followed.

Other developers took note and housing tracks blossomed from the earth where crops had been grown before. There were houses for almost everybody, ranging from eight-bedroom mansions in Greenwich, Connecticut on two-acre plots of ground to little copy-cat stucco boxes five feet apart in Daly City, California.

Levitt, though, was the first and the master. Five years after he began, his company would construct homes with such assembly-line speed, that they were able to raise as many as 40 houses a day. With a down payment of \$200 (for the returning G.I., it was often no down payment or closing costs only), and paying \$63 a month (including taxes) couples could purchase a new, appliance-laden, \$10,000 Cape Cod-style home in the suburbs. The rush to the "burbs" was in full force: an extraordinary, unparalleled event.

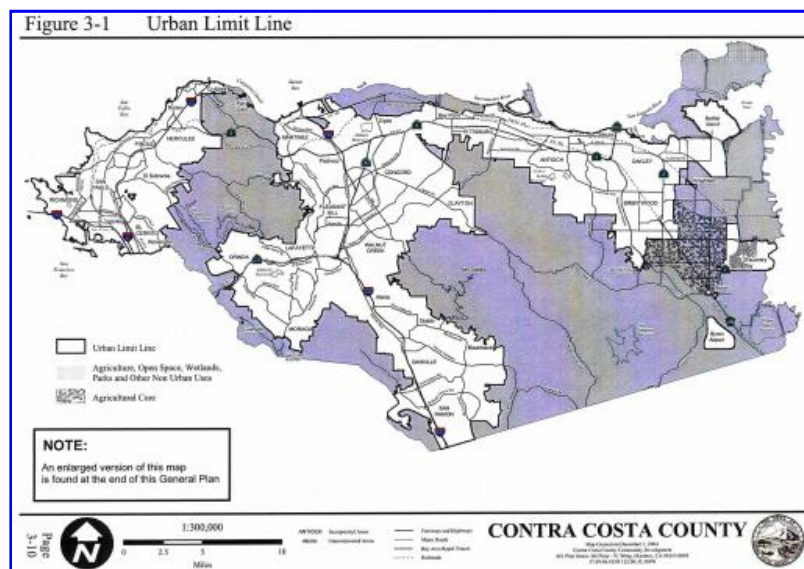
However, the phenomenon of the post-war suburban life could never have succeeded were it not for the automobile and the modern highway. Automobile registration rose from 26 million in 1945 to over forty million in 1950. No-car families became one-car families, then two-car families, which spurred other industries. In a ten-year period starting in 1948, 4,000 drive-in theaters with playgrounds and laundromats were in use. There were drive-in restaurants, grand shopping centers and finally shopping malls. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, the largest public works expenditure in U.S. history, authorized \$24.8 billion dollars to build 41,000 miles of interstate highways over 13 years. This new freedom of the road allowed people to move further away for their place of work.

Fearing an onslaught of homes and roads the residents of Contra Costa County approved Measure 'C' in 1990. One of the major elements of the Measure was the Contra Costa 65/35 Land Preservation Plan. This Plan ensures that urban development in the County is limited to no more than 35% of the land and that at least 65% of all land shall be preserved for agriculture, open space, wetlands, parks and other non-urban uses. To enforce the Land Preservation Plan an Urban Limit Line (ULL) was established in 1991. The ULL identifies the outer edges of urban development in Contra Costa County and is a land use and growth management policy, designed to preserve agriculture land

and open space by specifying a “line in the land” around an urban area outside of which development is prevented or discouraged.

In positioning the initial ULL the County used many factors to determine where its placement would be, such as soil types, existing open spaces, parks and other recreation areas. Lands with a slope greater than 26 percent; wetlands and other areas deemed not suitable for development (lack of water, lack of infrastructure, too far from existing urban areas, potential environmental damage and other such factors).

The ULL is used by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) as a tool when considering incorporation or annexation of land located inside or outside the ULL. However, location of land within the Urban Limit Line provides no guarantee that the land may be developed. If land is developed within the Urban Limit Line, even then, a substantial portion of this land shall be retained for open space, parks and recreational uses.



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Archived Entry

San Ramon approves new sphere of influence plan in Tassajara Valley

By **Sophia Kazmi**
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 02/01/2010 04:20:29 PM PST

Updated: 02/01/2010 07:05:26 PM PST

SAN RAMON — An amended sphere of influence request for the Tassajara Valley has received the thumbs up from the San Ramon City Council.

The amended plan, created following a discussion with Contra Costa County and Danville authorities, would allow San Ramon to potentially annex a strip of the Valley west of Camino Tassajara, east of the city limit, north of the Alameda-Contra Costa County line and south of Penny Lane.

A sphere of influence is an area over which a city or town has governmental and economic control.

City Council members voted unanimously in favor of the plan at their Jan. 26 meeting

Danville's proposed sphere of influence is north of San Ramon's proposed sphere, and north and east of Blackhawk.

Danville Town Council members unanimously approved submitting their request Jan. 12.

Under the proposed plan, about half of Tassajara Valley remains outside of Danville's or San Ramon's control. The plans have to be approved by Contra

Costa County's Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO).

LAFCO was looking at sphere of influence updates at its Sept. 9 meeting, but deferred any action on the Tassajara Valley until Danville, San Ramon and the county had a chance to talk about possibly submitting a joint proposal to the commission. Danville was concerned about traffic issues stemming from any possible development and wanted a buffer. The compromise reached is what neighbors voted on.

LAFCO is waiting for a report from the municipalities on the outcome of the discussions, said Lou Ann Texeira, LAFCO's executive officer.

The commission, composed of representatives from cities, special districts and the county, could choose to move forward with a decision on the spheres of influence, or it could wait for Danville and San Ramon to complete their general plan updates — which both are in the process of doing — before taking any action.

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