



http://www.insidebayarea.com/trivalleyherald/localnews/ci_13653373

Groups reach settlement on Stoneridge Drive extension

By Robert Jordan
Contra Costa Times
10/27/2009

PLEASANTON — A settlement over the extension of Stoneridge Drive has been reached between the city and environmental and citizens groups who sued over the project in March.

Safe Streets Pleasanton, Center for Biological Diversity, Alameda Creek Alliance and two citizens agreed to dismiss their suit if the city conducts a supplemental environmental impact report for the extension of Stoneridge Drive and prevents construction on the extension until the report is complete. The agreement was reached in August but is awaiting approval by an Alameda County Superior Court judge.

"The settlement is like hitting the reset button," said Jeff Miller, a conservation advocate for the Center for Biological Diversity. "(The city) is going to go back and look at environmental impact. It gives them a chance to go back and do it right."

The supplemental environmental impact report is expected to be released Thursday, said Michael Roush, Pleasanton's city attorney.

Once the supplemental report is released, there will be a 45-day review period during which the public can comment on the document. After that period, the City Council could vote to certify the document.

"The intent of the supplemental EIR is to provide additional information that will satisfy the concerns that were raised," Roush said.

The parties sued the city in March after the council passed the extension of Stoneridge Drive from Trevor Drive to El Charro Road as part of the Staples Ranch Development.

In the suit, the plaintiffs claimed the reports — specifically the environmental impact report — failed to analyze the effects the road extension would have on the surrounding wildlife and habitat as well as residential neighborhoods.

Plaintiffs also argued the reports the council submitted did not adequately review or mitigate the effects construction would have on a rare plant species, the San Joaquin Speerscale, as well as the California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, pond turtle and steelhead trout.

"Our position from the get-go was we were not opposed to project," said Ralph Kanz, the conservation director Alameda Creek Alliance. "We were against the improper (mitigation) for the project."

City officials have said they believed the environmental impact report included in the original approval was sufficient. But the environmental groups argued the studies used in the report were from an EIR conducted in 1993 that was not done by Pleasanton and could not be confirmed as completed.

Both Miller and Kanz said they are not opposed to mitigation on or off the construction site. Kanz said one off-site mitigation possibility would be for the city to provide off site 2 acres of permanent preserved land where the San Joaquin Speerscale thrives for every acre the project destroys.

The Staples Ranch development includes a 37-acre auto mall, a 45-acre senior continuing care community, 11 acres of retail, a 17-acre community park, including a 7-acre ice-skating facility and a 5-acre neighborhood park with a water detention basin.