

Blue Mountain residents wrestle with zoning issues

Since January 2005, Blue Mountain residents and Calaveras County District 2 Supervisor Steve Wilensky have been working on an amendment to the Calaveras County General Plan that was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1998 but never implemented.

The amendment would have limited half-acre, high-density residential development within the 24-square-mile Blue Mountain region to within distinct residential centers and in proportion to other county residential centers.

Parcels outside the residential centers were to be a minimum of 40 acres, the size for deer wintering areas in the 1998 amendment.

In October, the Board of Supervisors rejected the 40-acre minimum and instead voted unanimously to make several recommendations.

One directs the county to update or prepare community plans for Glencoe/Rail Road Flat, West Point and Wilseyville at the same time as plans are done for Valley Springs and

Copperopolis.

Another proposes an ordinance to rezone the Blue Mountain region to conform to 1996 General Plan open space and conservation elements including timberlands, mineral resources, agricultural lands and wildlife habitats. A new map illustrating this rezoning will be presented at a Board of Supervisors meeting at 1:30 p.m. on Dec. 4. The location for this meeting will be announced.

“The new zoning map will implement what is in the current general plan,” said Calaveras County Planning Director Robert Sellman. “The zoning had been text in the general plan, but excluded by the way the plan was written.” On the new map, all previously unclassified parcels will be rezoned as Rural Agricultural (RA).

The map will follow the 1996 general plan calling for 20-acre minimum parcels outside community centers for timberland and mineral resource land and 40-acre minimums for deer wintering areas.

Until community plans are completed, the map will show community centers, which will appear for reference purposes until the community plans are completed.

According to Sellman, the decision process for parcel size minimums, community centers, residential centers and community plans will be addressed during the community planning process for each area, which will begin in early 2007.

“We will take the community centers and residential centers into the community planning process, which is much more intricate,” said Sellman.

“We can now move forward with community plans,” said Sellman. “Logically speaking, (as an example), the Rail Road Flat community plan will envelop the immediate area for development and how nearby or adjoining areas develop,” said Sellman.

“Water and septic will need to be integrated into communities, which is why the community planning makes sense.”

What the board decided

The recommendations, with a target date of Dec. 4, are as follows:

1. Direct staff to do community plans for West Point, Glencoe, Rail Road Flat and Wilseyville and with those of Copperopolis and Valley Springs.
2. Supervisors understand that the land use designation in the 1996 General Plan Open Space and Conservation Element maps applies to the 25-square-mile Residential Center, because the only reference to 40 acres states that a maximum density of one dwelling unit per 40 acres applies to land within the listed significant protected wildlife and botanical habitats.
3. Bring an ordinance to re-zone the 25-square-mile Blue Mountain Residential Center to conform with existing 1996 General Plan Open Space and Conservation Element maps, no later than four to six weeks.
4. Bring a general plan amendment to affirm the Blue Mountain Residential Center shall be revised to create four community centers proportional in land area to other community plans in the county.
5. Because of the above actions, no action will be taken on the current proposed general plan amendment and zoning amendments.