

Asphalt plant OK'd by planning commission

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It appears the Hogan Quarry asphalt plant issue will go to the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors for a decision.

The Calaveras County Planning Commission on a 4- 1 vote Thursday adopted a resolution granting an appeal that, if it stands, avoids the proposal going through a conditional use permit process.

However, opponents of the hot plant have come out to say they will file an appeal.

Thursday's 4 to 1 vote was identical to an outcome the week before indicating the planning panel's intent to grant the appeal to Ford Construction and CB Asphalt. Commissioners Ted Allured, Lisa Muetterties, David Tunno and Kelly Wooster voting in favor of the resolution and Fawn McLaughlin voting against.

When asked on Monday whether MyValleySprings.com would appeal the planning decision, the organization's president, Joyce Techel, said, "Yes absolutely! The appeal letter will be submitted before the end of next week."

Thursday's consideration of the resolution was somewhat anti-climatic from the week before when several hours were spent in public testimony and discussion between the commissioners and staff.

The planning panel spent less than 30 minutes Thursday on the item, mostly fine-tuning some of the wording in the resolution.

Three members of the public- all against the asphalt plant and the attorney for the appellants spoke.

Techel said the resolution before the planning commissioners was not supported with the findings and evidence.

"Staff provided substantial evidence to support a finding that the project 'may have a significant effect on the environment,'" Techel said.

"This is so disheartening because it's so clearly important that we protect the residents that live along that route," said Janice Bassett of MyValleySprings.com and a nearby resident.

Brock Estes, another nearby resident, was told by McLaughlin, the planning panel chairwoman, to limit his comments only to the language in the resolution.

“This doesn’t appear to be a very democratic set up,” he said.

The planning panel, in making its decision, cited reports from experts hired by the county and the applicants that the asphalt plant did not impose a significant health risk to humans.

Ford Construction and CB Asphalt have also argued that a conditional use permit through the county is unnecessary because state and federal regulations safeguard the public.