

Supes pass ordinance to save station

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An interim urgency ordinance temporarily blocking demolition of any historic building in unincorporated Calaveras County was adopted by the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors.

Tuesday's decision by the board came after criticism from Board Chairman Jack Garamendi that the urgency ordinance as presented was too broad.

The ordinance, which was amended during the meeting, went into effect immediately and is good for 45 days while county staff prepares a permanent "cultural resources management ordinance" for the board's consideration. That process is expected to take more than 45 days and the urgency ordinance can be extended up to nearly two years.

The primary reason behind consideration of the urgency was the pending demolition of the former Valley Springs train depot located on the southwest corner of State Routes 12 and 26. The structure was built around 1888-89 and is considered historical by the California Office of Historical Preservation and eligible for the National Register of Historical Places.

However, Calaveras County has nothing in code to preserve its historical sites. Since the ordinance was being considered under "urgency" provisions, thus avoiding mandatory public notice and public hearing requirements, it needed a four-fifths vote of the board for approval.

Making matters more complicated, District 5 Supervisor Benjamin Stopper was absent, so the four remaining supervisors needed to be in agreement.

Garamendi voiced his concerns about the portion of the proposed urgency ordinance that construction or alterations to an historical building would require the owner to obtain a Conditional Use Permit, which would cost \$5,240 in fees to the county.

"If we're able to work this out to make this about demolition, about preserving these buildings, I'd probably be even OK on a limited term for this broad sweep..." Garamendi said, "but we have to hammer these things out or we're going to end up trying to do the right thing but having unintended consequences that could cascade down."

County Counsel Sarah Edwards informed the board minor changes to the proposed ordinance, such as deleting the mention of construction and alteration and only focusing on demolition, could be made.

Most counties already have historic preservation ordinances, said District 4 Supervisor Amanda Folendorf, and "this is a step in the right direction."

After a brief recess, the revised ordinance was presented to the board and approved 4-0.

The ordinance is applicable to buildings 75 years or older and either listed or have been deemed by the State Historical Resources Commission to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historical Places or the California Register of Historical Places.

Garamendi also voiced his concern about use of the word "eligible," calling it "too broad."

Once the permanent ordinance is developed, it will go through public notice requirements and public hearings before the county Planning Commissioners and Board of Supervisors.

Planning Director Gabriel Elliott also suggested the county board could have community meetings to outline the final ordinance.