

Planners side with developer

By Nick Baptista, The Valley Springs News, August 19, 2015

A majority of the Calaveras County Planning Commission on Thursday backed a request by Olive Orchard Estates subdivision developer Ryan Voorhees to eliminate some previously required offsite road improvements.

The action came after a recent traffic study determined the improvements were unnecessary. The commission voted 3-2 with Commissioners Ted Allured, Lisa Muetteries and David Tunno in favor of removing the agreed-upon improvements to Olive Orchard Road and the intersection with State Route 26, while Fawn McLaughlin and Kelly Wooster were opposed to the change.

Joyce Techel, MyValleySprings.com president, opposed the Voorhees request, saying he made promises while the project was going through the approval process that he likely never intended to fulfill.

“There is a troubling pattern existing with this applicant and his projects,” Techel said.

Dave Tanner of Valley Springs represented Voorhees. Tanner said Voorhees has paid the county’s required Road Impact Mitigation and a benefit basin fee associated with the project and approval of the request would eliminate the necessity to pay \$35,000 a year toward a bond guaranteeing roadwork, the county and Caltrans no longer see a need for.

“To me, the message ought to be that when you make a deal with the county in writing, and the community relies on it, OK, you ought to uphold your end of it,” said District 4 Commissioner Wooster.

While the money may not be needed for improvements near Olive Orchard Estates, it could remain in the county’s kitty and be used elsewhere, he added.

District 5 Commissioner Tunno disagreed.

Since the mitigation measures were unnecessary, “the fair thing to do,” is to eliminate them, Tunno said, and would send a clear message the county if fair to do business with.

“We need more people willing to sink money into this county and we ought not to be chasing them away,” he said.