

# Just who is a Valley Springs ‘citizen’ anyway?

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*By Colin Rigley*

Colleen Hiner walked to the front of the room as voices echoed through the Community United Methodist Church in Valley Springs and wrote: “What/Where is Valley Springs? What is a community plan? Who is a citizen of Valley Springs?”

The questions went unanswered Wednesday night when about 40 residents met to discuss the Valley Springs Community Plan, but there was no shortage of opinions on the topic. By the end of the night a system was in place to answer Hiner’s questions and to set the stage for how Valley Springs will develop.

Hiner, a grad student from the University of California Davis, was brought in to help update the Valley Springs Community Plan through the university’s Cooperative Extension program. The community plan been collecting dust since it was released 1974.

The purpose of Wednesday’s meeting was to gather community input and form a group to draft a new plan. Members of myvalleysprings.com have been at the forefront of planning in the area, but they made it clear that ideas for the new plan need to come from all community members. Within minutes, voices

filled the room as the meeting attendees argued over who is an actual resident of Valley Springs. Dave Tanner, of Tanner Consulting in Valley Springs, said that nearly everyone at Wednesday’s meeting came from either Rancho Calaveras or La Contenta; only three people in the room said they lived within Valley Springs’ boundaries. Tanner said that Valley Springs was not sufficiently represented “and we’re going to tell them what to do with their community.”

But Tanner’s comments were quickly protested by Rancho and La Contenta residents who said they do not live within the unofficial boundaries, but still consider themselves Valley Springs residents. “We may live in our little houses,” said Marti Crane, a Rancho Calaveras resident, “and then we go and we shop here (Valley Springs). So this is an extension of our home.”

There was no resolution to the question of what constitutes a Valley Springs resident, but Joyce Techel, myvalleysprings.com president, said the community boundary is something that can be identified and changed through the community plan. Much of the night was spent trying to corral the crowd and keep the focus on the community plan. Attendees managed to agree on seven elements to be included in the community plan: circulation, housing, conservation, land use, safety, economic development and community design. After brainstorming

what each element would comprise, people then volunteered to develop a vision for each element, which will be brought together for the community plan.

County General Plan Coordinator Lynn O’Connor said the best way to get the community plan incorporated in the county’s updated general plan would be to design a vision for Valley Springs rather than an implementation plan. “We would rather see you have a clear articulated vision for the community, by the community, than have you get hung up on the details of how to write it,” O’Connor said.

But the timeline is ticking, she added. The county expects to have a rough general plan ready by August, at which time the community plans need to be ready. “You need to get some commitments from people who say, ‘Yes, I’m willing to help with that,’” Hiner said. Another meeting was scheduled to plan for the next step.

That meeting will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 4, again at the Community United Methodist Church, 135 Laurel St., Valley Springs. Contact Colin Rigley at [crigley@calaverasenterprise.com](mailto:crigley@calaverasenterprise.com).