

Approval of mass zoning change harms Burson landowner

By Nick Baptista

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Changes to Calaveras County's zoning map were unanimously approved Tuesday by the Board of Supervisors with only one concern surfacing during the public hearing.

Approximately 6,900 parcels would be affected by the changes, Planning Director Peter Maurer told the board.

The only feedback from the public during the hearing came from a Burson landowner.

What was once a commercially zoned property near the intersection of State Route 12 and Burson Road was being switched to rural residential under the new zoning map.

The landowner, Rick Ponti, told the board he became aware of the proposed zoning change when he was approached to sell his property for construction of a store.

District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli asked why the board couldn't make the change back to commercial at this time and Maurer said such an action required proper public notice.

"It doesn't seem right," Tofanelli said.

With any large project, such as the zoning map changes, errors will be discovered, Maurer said, and they can be fixed in the future.

Tofanelli suggested Maurer and Ponti meet and discuss how to address this particular zoning issue.

Ponti said his property has lost nearly two-thirds of its value by being rezoned from commercial to residential.

"Please help me with that," Ponti said.

Since adoption of the new General Plan in November, 2019, the planning department has been working to update the zoning for consistency. Draft maps were provided on the county's website in December, 2020 for review.

The portal to the maps was "not as user friendly as we would have liked," Maurer told the board.

However, "for the most part, people who questioned the zoning changes to their benefit have been able to work with staff and with me to identify the changes and for the most part have been satisfied."