

Redding council approves Churn Creek Road extension

By Scott Mobley

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A long-ago-proposed northern segment of Churn Creek Road will return to Redding's transportation planning docket.

The city's redevelopment agency this evening also took another step toward eminent domain against two downtown property owners for the new Shasta County courthouse.

The City Council voted 3-2 to launch the environmental studies needed to punch Churn Creek Road north from Highway 299 to Oasis Road. Those studies would include how much a street handling 10,000 cars and trucks per day would harm homes along Hawley Road, the narrow semi-rural lane now stretching north from the highway.

Mayor Missy McArthur voted with council members Patrick Jones and Rick Bosetti resurrecting the road. Vice Mayor Dick Dickerson and council member Francie Sullivan voted no.

The road extension has pitted northeast Redding residents against each other, with some supporting the extension and others opposing it.

Opponents handed out stickers before the meeting and mustered 12 speakers. At least one threatened to sue the city if the council voted to restore the extension to the general plan.

A city-commissioned environmental impact report showed the road isn't even needed to serve subdivisions and shopping centers to the north, opponents said. The city has already approved several subdivisions totaling 350 lots assuming the road won't get built.

The extension will ruin the tree-lined Hawley Road neighborhood, destroy a large wetland that attracts dozens of bird species and aquatic animals while costing the city millions at a time when cash is scarce, opponents said.

"I've lived in my home on Hawley Road for 35 years," said Phyllis Pollock. "I have trees in my yard that are 60 years old. I would not live long enough to see those trees replaced if this road goes through."

Another 11 speakers – mostly residents of the Country Oaks subdivision just northwest of Churn Creek Road's current terminus near Highway 299 – urged the council to build the road.

Residents say they are tired of speeding motorists using Collyer and Mountain View drives as a short cut, sometimes barreling around tight corners and taking out mailboxes or sideswiping parked cars. Churn Creek Road extension opponents are among those cutting through the neighborhood, although they don't have a choice, some said.

"I want to sympathize with the people on Hawley who don't want our traffic," said Country Oaks resident Doug Guy. "I don't want them to have our traffic either. It's really dangerous. But we need another artery if we are going to put a shopping center in."

Although council members were divided on whether to build the extension, all agreed the city should do something soon to curb speeding on Collyer and Mountain View drives through the Country Oaks subdivision.

Redding has planned to push Churn Creek Road past Oasis since 1970. The California Department of Transportation built an interchange on Highway 299 at Churn Creek anticipating the road would eventually go north.

Throughout the 1980s into the 1990s, Redding required developers building the Blossom Park, Churn Creek Park and Fairway Estates subdivisions north of Hawley Road to dedicate right-of-way for the eventual road extension. The city owns right-of-way for the road from Highway 299 to just past Constitution Way.

The general plan task force meeting in the late 1990s affirmed the need for the road extension after much discussion.

But no one took the road seriously until 2003, when Redding officials began developing the Oasis Road Specific Plan for a big box shopping zone to the north. Residents of Blossom Park, Churn Creek Park, Fairway Estates, Hawley Road and Ridgewood Estates organized a disciplined opposition to the road while making clear they never opposed development at Oasis.

The council in 2006 dropped the road from the plan after the EIR for Oasis showed an extension from Highway 299 wasn't needed to get motorists to and from the shopping centers and apartments expected in the area over the next few decades.

The city could prepare for more traffic on Twin View Boulevard, Collyer Drive and, eventually, a Shasta View Road extension over Highway 299 to Oasis Road, according to the EIR.

The current council majority wasn't on the dais in 2006. Bosetti and Jones criticized that decision as political opportunism in the heat of an election, while McArthur said she looked at it "askance" and never understood why it was made.

All three said the road never should have been removed from the general plan and they were merely restoring it. Another 15 years may pass before it's actually needed, they said.

Sullivan said the costs of the road will outweigh its benefits. Dickerson said the road isn't needed to handle growth or as an alternative to the freeway.

Environmental and plan line studies needed to return the road to planning documents and fee schedules will cost up to \$225,000. Road construction itself is currently estimated at \$13 million to \$27 million, depending on whether the city builds two lanes or five.

The city will tap transportation impact fees – not the general fund – to pay for the studies and road construction.

In other business this evening, the council, acting as the Redevelopment Agency board, voted unanimously to deposit \$1 million with the state treasurer to acquire two downtown properties for a new courthouse.

The state Administrative Office of the Courts plans a \$200 million courthouse in the block bounded by Butte, Yuba, Court and Oregon streets. The state would reimburse the redevelopment agency for any property acquisition expenses, under an agreement reached last year.

The historic Andrew Dobrowsky House on the corner of Yuba and Oregon streets is one of the properties the agency will seek on behalf of the state through eminent domain.



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