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## OCEANSIDE: City considers eminent domain for water project

By CRAIG TENBROECK - Staff Writer

OCEANSIDE ---- A thirst for more local water may prompt the city to start eminent domain proceedings on a slice of land near Highway 76.

Oceanside has drilled two wells in north Oceanside that tap into the Mission Basin. It wants to acquire an easement on a vacant piece of private land to run underground water lines that would connect the wells to the city's purification plant.

As of Tuesday, however, negotiations with the property owner ---- Goli Enterprises Inc. ---- were at a stalemate, said William Marquis, Oceanside's senior property agent.

The City Council will decide Wednesday whether acquiring the property rights through eminent domain is in the public interest. Approval would require four of five council votes.

Goli Enterprises' attorney, John Credell, did not return calls for comment this week. In a letter to the city a few months ago, he said the company was looking to develop a hotel on the property at Highway 76 and Foussat Street.

"The acquisition by eminent domain may block the project in its entirety, change the nature of the project, change the size of the project, make the project less profitable, (and) decrease revenues to the city of Oceanside and surrounding businesses," Credell wrote.

Marquis said Oceanside's interest is only in the narrowest and "least usable portion of the property." The owner could still use it for parking, he said.

Oceanside built the Mission Basin Groundwater Purification Facility in 1994 to turn groundwater into potable water and bolster its local supply. Five wells in the city are producing, but three "are not performing as well as expected," a city report states

Councilman Jerry Kern, a water policy wonk, called them "dry holes."

The new wells, near Fire Station No. 7 on Mission Avenue, look to be "real good producers," Water Utilities Director Lonnie Thibodeaux said Tuesday. Each should produce more than a million gallons a day.

Local water has become a prized commodity, as California is experiencing a harsh drought. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger declared it a state of emergency last week.

Oceanside has offered Goli Enterprises \$26,301 in exchange for the 1,968 square feet of

permanent easement and temporary use of 11,547 square feet of land for construction. Thibodeaux said alternative routes for the water lines would pose difficult construction issues, raising the cost of the project substantially.

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