

Tuesday, July 31, 2007

# July 31: Disney, housing developer get more time to talk

## During Anaheim council meeting, protesters pitch tents to show support for affordable housing.

By SARAH TULLY and ERIK ORTIZ

The Orange County Register

ANAHEIM - A home developer and Disney have three more weeks to strike a compromise on a dispute about whether homes should be allowed in the Anaheim Resort tourist area around Disneyland.

A representative from SunCal, the company that wants to build homes in the resort, sent a letter two hours before the meeting to ask the City Council for more time to talk with officials from the Walt Disney Co., which has launched ballot measures and sued over the 1,500-home project with 225 affordable apartments.

The City Council voted 3-2 to again delay decision on an election date for a referendum on the issue. Mayor Curt Pringle and Councilman

Harry Sidhu voted against the postponement.

A Disney-funded group, Save Our Anaheim Resort, vowed to push to get an election date immediately, possibly by taking legal action. SOAR collected enough signatures to force the referendum to overturn the city's previous approval of residential zoning in the resort area.

"Any further delay beyond next week's meeting is not acceptable," said Todd Ament, SOAR co-chairman.

Disney spokesman Bob Tucker declined to say what the company wanted to happen Tuesday but said the company wants an "agreement or election as soon as possible.

Councilwoman Lucille Kring said she assumed it would take more than the two weeks that the council allowed at its last meeting for the parties to come up with a solution. It took six days for SunCal and Disney just to work out a confidentiality agreement and the parties are still discussing possible solutions, Kring said.

She said she prefers to see if something can be resolved before taking the issue to voters.

In addition to the referendum, SOAR is also collecting signatures for an initiative that would require voter approval of any housing complex within resort boundaries. To qualify for the February ballot, signatures must be submitted by Aug. 8 – before the next time the council will consider the matter.

"I personally feel the voters want to get on with it," Mayor Curt Pringle said.

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Tuesday's meeting was calmer than the previous meeting when more than 60 speakers gave testimony for about two and a half hours. Only about 14 speakers got up, mostly against the residential zoning plan.

Some were frustrated with the lack of a resolution on the issue that has dragged on for more than a year. "Make a decision one way or another. Get this back on track," said resident Patrick Pepper.

Most housing supporters stayed outside, demonstrating their stance by pitching about 100 red-domed mini tents to show the need for more affordable housing units throughout Orange County. Demonstrators said they support housing on a plot of land across from Disneyland where SunCal seeks to build homes. Disney is fighting the creation of residential housing, made possible by a zoning change.

More than 45 workers in the city's resort area and members of affordable-housing advocacy groups took part in a skit meant to illustrate the need for affordable housing in Anaheim.

Some demonstrators dressed as Disney villains who refused to let workers set up their tents in an area designated as "Disneyland." The workers were also forced from an area dubbed "Nimbyland."

A chorus of "Si se puede!" or "Yes, we can!" concluded the spectacle.

Garden Grove resident Eddie Chavez, a bellhop at the Disneyland Hotel for 20 years, said he took part in the tent rally to show that the affordable housing needs are not being met in Anaheim for workers of the resort area.

"The community is never part of the equation," Chavez said. "We want to show a visual that we are part of this equation."

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