

Weekly ReCAP for February 8, 2019

Next CPC meeting- March 4, 2019, 1:30 pm. Main Library in San Andreas

**BOS February meetings: 12th (agenda available online), 19th & 26th.
PC February meetings: 14th (canceled) & 28th**

EPFW Love the Forest Concert – 3/9/19 – New location – Vida Buena Farms – Vallecito – Mark you calendars! More info later.

Developers lay out plans for Copper

- [Enterprise report by Dakota Morlan](#)
- Jan 30, 2019

Locally-based CV Development Partners announced a number of major projects coming to Copperopolis during a town hall meeting for Saddle Creek Resort residents on Monday.

Developers Tom Hix and Mike Fletcher have built “award winning golf courses” and residential communities, including CordeValle in San Martin and Las Palmas Ranch in Salinas, with a combined value of \$2 billion, according to their presentation.

CV Development is partnering with The Nathan Family Office, a “Los Angeles-based family office managing investments within real estate, venture capital, and other alternative investment classes on behalf of the Nathan Family,” according to the company’s profile on LinkedIn.

Under the umbrella name of “Copper Valley,” the partnership seeks to revamp the Town Square into a destination point and build up to 800 new homes within Saddle Creek.

According to Fletcher, that number is significantly less than the 1,060 potential homes that were approved by the county for real estate giant Castle & Cooke, who were the previous owners of Saddle Creek, the Town Square and thousands of acres of undeveloped land in the Copperopolis area.

“As you shrink the supply of houses, the demand goes up,” Fletcher said. “So the days of more and more houses being built everywhere, I think, are over.

Fletcher told the Enterprise on Tuesday that CV Development hopes to attract baby boomers and millennials from the Bay Area who are seeking an outdoor-centric and community-based lifestyle.

“If we are good stewards, we’ll find that balance between growth and protection of the rural character,” Fletcher said.

A wide range of plans

Within the next year, Fletcher and Hix plan to revitalize the Town Square with new businesses and an outdoor event center called “The Quarry,” which will accommodate roughly 400 people. A horse-drawn carriage is expected to arrive within a few months, and a courthouse will be added to create a wedding venue.

The developers said they have been talking with an unnamed doctor about moving a small clinic and pharmacy into the square and have discussed relocating the post office as well.

In coming years, the partnership plans on adding other amenities to the square, including a market, a medical center, a Sheriff's Office substation, a timeshare hotel and up to 74 new residential units.

"We plan on making the Town Square a gateway to the foothills for the couple million people who drive along Highway 4," said Fletcher, who currently resides part-time in a Town Square loft.

Big changes are also planned for Saddle Creek, which the developers announced may be subject to a new name and some rebranding.

The 18-hole course was running at a \$1 million deficit under Castle & Cooke and was not sustainable, according to Hix and Fletcher. Now managed by Troon, an international golf management company, Saddle Creek will see modifications to nearly every facet of its operations, including its restaurant, website and fitness center. A roundabout on Little John Road at the northern entrance of the golf community is expected to be complete by year's end.

Building out the remaining lots within Saddle Creek will be the first major real estate project CV Development hopes to tackle, with the construction of approximately 20 new homes scheduled to begin by late summer. The new community will be called "Renaissance," and offer single-story homes in the 2,200- to 2,800-square-foot range.

Within five to seven years, the partnership hopes to build a 15,000-square-foot community center near the northern border of Saddle Creek, offering dining, a fitness center, a multi-purpose room, spa and outdoor activities.

All projects within Saddle Creek have been approved by the county, according to Fletcher.

Saddle Creek residents and members take in a presentation hosted by CV Development Partners at the

Another project the partnership hopes to complete by year's end is to open up Sawmill Lake, a 247-acre property with a small lake just south of the Town Square, for camping and outdoor recreation. There are plans to develop the land for residential and/or mixed-use units within three to five years, pending the release of the county's updated General Plan.

Copper Valley Ranch, which consists of 4,267 acres on the southern border of Saddle Creek near Tulloch Reservoir, will likely be preserved as a venue for outdoor pursuits with a "small residential component," according to the developers. The property was designated for cattle grazing in 2016 after Castle & Cooke's plans to build 2,400 homes were shut down by the Calaveras County Planning Commission.

In it for the long haul

"About 23 years ago, Castle & Cooke started a vision, and about 10 years ago everything stopped, and we were wondering what was going to happen," said Saddle Creek General Manager Rick Morgan during the presentation. "Now we have our knights in shining armor who are going to save us."

"We're not here for the short term," Hix told the audience, highlighting his 20 years working in Copperopolis to build Tuscany Hills, a development plan on Tulloch that has yet to come to fruition. "My hair was black when I moved here," he joked.

Over the course of two presentations hosting over 300 people, the partners received overwhelmingly enthusiastic feedback from the Saddle Creek residents.

"Thank you for the investment you're making in this community. We know it's significant," said one resident, Ron Von Trapp. "Your vision is terrific."

“We’ve received nothing but positive feedback and support from the community,” Fletcher told the Enterprise. He added that future presentations were being planned for other areas of Copperopolis.

“We’ve had new businesses approaching us wanting to move into the Town Square. . . . The word has gotten out, and I think people are getting excited and want to be a part of it.” Fletcher added that the square has already seen an influx of activity and social media traffic. “We placed a geocache in the square, and we’ve had over 100 people coming in looking for it.”

Throughout the presentation on Monday, Fletcher and Hix repeated the sentiment that none of their plans will be possible without the active support of the community.

“Everything hinges on that General Plan,” District 4 Supervisor Dennis Mills told the Enterprise on Tuesday. He stated that CV Development’s plans will likely not experience any pitfalls with the current Board of Supervisors and an updated General Plan, though he added that other projects in Copperopolis have floundered in spite of county approval.

“My fear is that a project would come out and be partially finished and left to languish,” Mills said. “Hasn’t that been the case with the Copper Town Square? How many years has it taken to get here? I think Tom and Mike both agree that it needs to get done.”

Some other concerns expressed by Mills were the ability of resources like fire protection and sewage infrastructure to keep up with increased development in Copperopolis, which has a population of less than 4,000.

“I think that there needs to be an economic impact study done,” Mills said. “I don’t think any of the (Copperopolis) basin has undergone that level of scrutiny.”

Despite his concerns, Mills expressed his overall support of the plans in Copperopolis: “I’m just happy for the new interest from these folks who are willing to take the risk here in Calaveras County – this is a financial risk. Hopefully they and the community will be rewarded for their effort.”

01/30/19 Correction: A previous version of this article listed up to 1,390 homes to be built by CV Development Partners. The actual number is 800, while 1,390 is the aggregate total of homes that may be built in Saddle Creek, including the 590 homes that have already been built by Castle & Cooke. Castle & Cooke had a total of 1,650 residential lots approved by the county.

Environmental advocacy group announces lawsuit over General Plan update

By Alex MacLean / The Union Democrat / January 31, 2019

A recently approved update to the Tuolumne County General Plan is facing a legal challenge from an environmental advocacy group based in Twain Harte.

The Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center, or CSERC, announced this week that it’s filing a lawsuit against the county and Board of Supervisors over the Jan. 3 approval of the plan, which sets long-range policies and goals related to land-use planning and development through 2040.

A copy of the 14-page civil complaint was provided by the center to The Union Democrat on Thursday, but the Tuolumne County Superior Court’s civil division had yet to receive it as of about 3 p.m.

The deadline for anyone to file a lawsuit over the plan's approval is Monday, Feb. 4.

John Buckley, executive director for CSERC, said that aspects of the plan and associated documents fail to meet certain requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, or CEQA, as well as state planning and zoning laws.

"The plan has many, many points of controversy," Buckley said. "Rather than attempt to force a redoing of the entire plan, this litigation is narrowly focused on some important issues."

One of the allegations in the center's complaint is that the board and county violated CEQA by certifying the plan's environmental impact report, or EIR, which is required to be completed whenever a project is anticipated to have a significant impact on the environment.

The complaint alleges the plan's EIR improperly assumed that development would not generally occur outside of established communities and failed to consider a number of feasible alternatives because it was narrowly focused on making development in the county easier.

"There are all these other values that are important, or at least as important," Buckley said. "Protecting scenic resources to benefit tourism and people living here, supporting agriculture, maintaining a rural quality of life — these are all things that got diminished in the plan because it was so focused on development."

The EIR also failed to adequately analyze and mitigate the plan's "significant impacts" on climate change, transportation, biological resources, air quality and agriculture, according to the complaint.

For example, the complaint stated the EIR expects development under the plan to result in greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 that would exceed the state's targeted threshold by more than 60 percent.

Buckley said the report relied upon a "climate action plan" that has yet to be created for meeting the state goals by 2040. He added that the county has talked about developing such a plan in response to climate change for years.

"There's no consequence for saying it's something you're going to do, because there's no legal requirement for the county," Buckley said. "It's not clear exactly when a plan would be created to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions."

The plan also re-designates more than 3,000 acres of agricultural land for commercial and residential uses and increases the number of homes that could be built on hundreds of additional acres, which the complaint alleges is inconsistent with goals in other parts of the plan.

State planning and zoning laws require a general plan to be an "integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies," the complaint stated.

Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger, a law firm based in San Francisco that specializes in environmental law, is representing CSERC in the lawsuit. The firm also submitted comments to the county on behalf of the center one day prior to the plan's approval.

Dozens of people spoke in support of and opposition to the plan at public hearings on Dec. 19 and Jan. 3.

Many of those in favor of approving the plan included business leaders, developers and people in industries that would benefit from increased development. They argued that the previous plan approved in 1996 was outdated and cumbersome.

Buckley also spoke at the meetings and outlined some of his center's concerns that are now included as part of the complaint. A number of others who spoke against the plan's approval felt the process was being rushed during the holiday season and mere days before two newly elected county supervisors

joined the board.

“We’re really understanding that different interests in the county can have different perspectives on a county general plan,” Buckley said on Thursday, “but because we have a responsibility to represent the environment, rural quality of life, and other resources values, we believe it’s our responsibility to point out the General Plan update doesn’t meet state requirements.”

The county received a notice of CSERC’s intent to file the lawsuit on Wednesday, as required by state law.

Quincy Yaley, assistant director of the county Community Resources Agency that oversaw development of the plan, stated in an email that she had only seen the notice as of Thursday but was “looking forward to reviewing the subject matter of the lawsuit.”

“I anticipate it will be on one of the issues that was previously raised by CSERC and responded to by the county in the final EIR,” she stated.

The lawsuit seeks a temporary delay on putting the plan into action and for the court to direct the county and board to overturn its approval and make whatever changes are necessary to comply with CEQA.

There’s also a request for the county to be ordered to pay the costs of the lawsuit and CSERC’s attorney fees, in addition to anything else the court deems “just and proper.”

Deputy County Counsel Carlyn Drivdahl said she had yet to receive a copy of the lawsuit on Thursday and couldn’t comment on what impact it could have the implementation of the revised plan.

District 5 Supervisor Karl Rodefer, who serves as board chairman, said he had heard about the notice of CSERC’s intent to file the lawsuit but also had yet to receive a copy, so he declined to comment on the specific claims.

“I have great confidence in staff and the group that we put together for both the General Plan and the EIR, and I believe that we will in large measure prevail,” Rodefer said. “But anytime you go before a judge, you don’t know what’s going to happen.”

Tuolumne Supervisors To Hear Biomass Facility Study Findings

[02/01/2019 5:29 pm PST](#)

Tori James, MML News Reporter

Sonora, CA – The Tuolumne County supervisors will be getting a close look this coming week at a finalized feasibility study for a \$22 million county biomass facility.

The effort, led by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), relates to planning stages for one in a suite of post-Rim Fire projects approved under a \$70 million federal HUD grant award from the National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC) in which the county is collaborating on with other local, state, and federal partners, as [reported here](#).

The recently completed second phase of the biomass facility feasibility study involved assessing viable related enterprises that could be co-located within the county. Among these are a small-scale, five-megawatt biomass power plant, sawmill, post and pole manufacturing plant, and businesses relating to firewood bundling and biomass fuel grinding.

Interested members of the public are invited to hear the presentation, slated for 11 a.m. at the supervisors' regular meeting Tuesday their chambers (2 S. Green St, 4th Floor) in Sonora. SNC and California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) representatives along with those from technical consultant The Beck Group will be on hand to deliver the report and answer questions.

For more details about the study, [click here](#).

Angels Camp strategizing for uncertain economic future

- [Enterprise report by Davis Harper](#)
- Feb 1, 2019

Faced with an ongoing fiscal crisis, Angels Camp leaders are forming long-term strategies to increase revenues.

“After more than three years of cost-cutting measures, the city is wrestling deferred maintenance both structurally and administratively, salary reductions impacting recruitment, dated tools, equipment and technology, and a lack of infrastructure investment that has handcuffed the city’s economic growth,” said Melissa Eades, the city administrator for Angels Camp.

Angels Camp has seen small victories in recent months, including voter approval for a sales tax increase, support for the construction of a Tractor Supply Co., development on DeNova Housing Development plans, and completion of a report detailing potential solutions for the city’s budget crisis, Eades said.

The report, conducted by a consultant called Citygate, recommended that the city search for alternative revenue streams, address deferred maintenance on infrastructure projects and unfunded pension liability (totaling \$4.7 million) and fine tune tools for administrative and finance procedures.

“I think the Citygate report has given us a baseline for where we stand financially as a community,” Eades said. It has also helped the city “communicate to taxpayers that the city conducts operations well, especially given the amount of resources we have.”

The report also emphasized the importance of developing a sustainable future for historical assets and facilities, including the city’s museum, a source of local pride, history and tourist income.

“There’s hope on the horizon,” Eades said. “We have to continue to be conservative and think creatively.”

As for long-term development, Destination Angels Camp (DAC) Executive Director Debbie Ponte said a bypass planned for the northwest quadrant of the Highway 4/Highway 49 intersection in Angels Camp is in its preliminary stages.

This year’s city budget allocated \$50,000 toward planning of the Foundry Lane access point, Ponte said.

The DAC is currently surveying developers and landowners in the area (approximately 100 to 150 acres) to assess development priorities, whether that is a light industrial business park, housing, shopping retail, family entertainment, restaurants or a field for youth sports, Ponte said.

Angels Camp Mayor Amanda Folendorf told the Enterprise Tuesday that one of the biggest economic challenges facing Angels Camp is updating aging water and wastewater infrastructure.

With both local residents and prospective development projects in mind, the city council is currently working on a rate study to address the issue.

“If (a rate increase) does not get approved, the city will be in a place where it cannot provide water or sewage,” Folendorf said. “Unless our citizens want (portable toilets) in their backyards or to get water from the creek, we need to stop being reactive and start to be proactive in ensuring our infrastructure (is) updated to provide these services to our citizens.”

Adding to Folendorf’s points, Ponte said the city’s aging water infrastructure – ranging from 30 to 60 years old in some areas – is a major barrier to recruiting new development projects.

“It’s hard to encourage new development when you have old pipes,” Ponte said.

After 60 days of outreach, the city council will hold a public hearing in April to make the final determination on what a new rate structure would look like.

Folendorf listed public safety as another economic challenge, specifying the need for an adequately staffed and funded police force and fire department.

Additional support for these services could come from an increase to the city’s Transient Occupancy Tax – a measure that could appear on the November ballot.

“All these services is what draws people to live, work and play in Angels Camp – if we cannot support these three services then we will be looking at some very hard choices and the citizens will have to make a choice on what they truly want this city to provide,” Folendorf said.

Chicken Ranch Casino Eyes Economic Growth

BJ Hansen, MML News Director / February 4, 2019

Jamestown, CA — With construction of a new event hall now complete, an expansion of gaming underway, the purchase of the Jamestown Hotel, and the potential to construct a new casino within the next 5-8 years, much is happening at the Chicken Ranch Casino.

Owned and operated by the Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians, the casino first opened in 1985. There are currently 40 tribal members, and of those, 20 are voting members, meaning they are over the age of 18. Clarke Broadcasting met with Lloyd Mathiesen, who was recently re-elected to new three year term as Tribal Chairman, to hear about current and long-term plans.

As part of an expansion of gaming, 247 machines are being added, and nine tables. It is in addition to the existing 360-plus machines. The casino is often running at a capacity of around ninety to ninety-five percent, so Mathiesen says they will be a welcomed addition. He anticipates the renovation to be finished around May 1st.

To help with traffic flow in and out of the casino, the tribe continues to work with Caltrans to plan for a roundabout on Highway 108. Construction is tentatively planned for Spring of 2020.

In addition, directly across Highway 108 the tribe owns hundreds of acres that will be put use through a partnership being initiated with CAL Poly, with details still in the early stages.

The tribe is also setting a footprint into downtown Jamestown, finalizing the purchase of the Jamestown Hotel. Mathieson and other members of the tribe grew up in Jamestown and have a passion to see it grow economically.

He adds, “It allows us to be a part of the Jamestown community, as far as downtown, and we can see what we can do, as far as other changes, so that it can get back to where it used to be.”

More economic ventures are in the planning stages, as this past fall the tribe initiated a new economic development company. Mathieson notes, “We are just getting it underway and working on a five-year plan.”

Within the next decade, there may even be a new casino constructed, to meet growing demand, closer to the earlier mentioned roundabout. Mathieson shares, “That’s what we would love to do. Obviously we have to renegotiate our compact with the new Governor, Gavin Newsom. We also want to see how our new expansion goes off. But, we’re shooting for 5-8 years (for a new casino). That’s what we’d like.”

Chicken Ranch Casino currently has around 230 employees. Click on the image box to see some of the recent additions, ongoing construction, and where the new roundabout, and potential new casino, will be located.

Mountain Springs Golf Course

[02/04/2019 3:39 pm PST](#)

BJ Hansen, MML News Director

Sonora, CA — The Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians announces that it has reached an agreement to purchase the Mountain Springs Golf Course.

[We reported on December 31st](#) that the course was temporarily closed as the owners were working out a sale with the Tribe. The Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians released a statement this afternoon reading, “The Tribe and Mountain Springs Development, LLC anticipate this sale will ensure the long term sustainability of the golf course.”

It goes on to state, “The Tribe always looks for ways to invest in the local community through a vision of providing world-class amenities and experiences for Tuolumne County residents and visitors alike. Mountain Springs Golf Course is a welcome addition to this vision. As the sale and transfer progresses over the next several weeks, TEDA, Inc. will be sharing the exciting plans that are underway.”

No details were provided at this time regarding when the course may potentially reopen.

It was designed by famed architect Robert Muir Graves and first opened in 1990. There is a golf shop, restaurant, driving range, putting greens and four sets of tees to accommodate golfers of all ages. The 18 hole course covers 6,665 yards.

Update: How Much Did The Storms Boost Sierra Snowpack?

[02/07/2019 1:32 pm PST](#)

Tracey Petersen and BJ Hansen, MML News Team

Update at 1:30 p.m.: This week's stormy weather has not only brought good news regarding the snow pack, but also for California's continued drought figures.

The already very wet winter has greatly reduced drought conditions in the state, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. It reported today (Thursday) that more than 34 percent of the state including the Sierra Nevada, much of the Central Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area is free of any significant dryness.

The monitor also says heavy rains removed most of the moderate drought designation that stretched from the Central Coast down to the southern portion of the state, shrinking the abnormally dry designated areas. What remains is just over 10 percent of California in the far north and south categorized in moderate or severe drought. The year began with less than 8 percent of the state being free of any drought or abnormally dry conditions. Further details on the wet weathers impact on the snowpack are below.

Original post at 9:50 a.m.: Sonora, CA — The California Department of Water Resources reports this morning that the recent storms have put the Sierra Nevada snowpack well above average for the date.

When the last manual readings were taken about a week ago, we reported that the figure was around 100-percent of average for February 1st. The DWR electronic sensors now indicate the statewide average is closer to 123-percent for the date. The Northern Sierra is 109-percent, the Central Sierra is 126-percent and the Southern Sierra is 135-percent.

Dodge Ridge Ski Resort reports receiving a combined 73-inches of snow over past three days. A similar amount fell at Bear Valley, where the resort was even forced to close on Tuesday, but has since reopened.

The lower foothills continue to dry out today after heavy snow fell in areas as low as downtown Sonora, Jamestown, Columbia, Murphys and Angels Camp. Light snowflakes were even reported for a short period in Central Valley communities like Merced.

More snow is in the forecast over the coming days. [Click here to view](#) the latest from the National Weather Service.

Tuolumne supervisors sued over General Plan environmental impacts

Months away from Calaveras General Plan update

- [Enterprise report by Davis Harper](#)
- Feb 5, 2019 Updated Feb 5, 2019

The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors was sued by a local environmental nonprofit last week over its recently approved development-centered General Plan.

The environmental impact report (EIR) for the plan is the basis for all of the policies and measures that

set planning direction in the county for the next 20 years. Calaveras County itself is working on its General Plan with forthcoming input from its Planning Commission.

“The (Tuolumne County) supervisors have made no attempt to conceal their desire to promote development and minimize environmental regulations,” said John Buckley, executive director for Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center (CSERC), the Twain Harte-based advocacy group filing the lawsuit. “Our center put forward lots of comments that offered middle-ground solutions that could still allow for new development while protecting scenic and rural county values. Supervisors chose to make no substantial changes, despite input given at two hearings.”

With only the vague promise of developing a “mitigation plan” in the future, the general plan fails to address climate change impacts caused by greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, Buckley specified.

“Planning to create a plan in the future is a nebulous and non-effective strategy,” Buckley said, comparing it to a heritage tree plan the county proposed 25 years ago that never came to fruition.

Attorneys representing CSERC alleged in the court filing that the plan’s Community Development and Design Element contains “numerous goals, policies and implementation programs directed at limiting sprawling rural development, promoting alternative forms of transportation and limiting GHG emissions” that contradict land use designations displayed in the land use map.

“Despite having well-stated intentions to encourage development around communities, the (plan’s land use map) actually redesignates thousands of acres of agricultural lands to residential and commercial uses – the opposite of leaving rural areas undeveloped,” Buckley said.

Policies in the previous plan that protected valley oak and old growth oak trees have been eliminated, Buckley added.

Calaveras County general plan developments

In neighboring Calaveras County, local officials are potentially months away from releasing its new general plan for a final public comment period. Calaveras County Planning Director Peter Maurer told the Enterprise Monday that he is hoping to start Planning Commission hearings in March. After the commission makes its recommendation, the plan will be presented to the Board of Supervisors for further review.

Maurer declined to comment on the lawsuit facing Tuolumne supervisors, or how the Calaveras board can avoid similar litigation in the upcoming months.

Buckley said that CSERC has been involved in Calaveras County general plan developments over the past decade as well.

“It is my hope that the makeup of the Calaveras County board is a better balance of decision makers when it comes to long-term planning,” Buckley said.

One of the key issues for the Calaveras plan, according to Buckley, will be whether it’s based on realistic growth expectations or is completely skewed based on outrageously high projections.

“Calaveras County had minimal population growth, but created a plan that would allow for a gigantic increase in population that is not consistent with state estimates for growth over the next 20 years,” Buckley said. “So when the county assumes there are 8,000 or more residents coming, that would justify a general plan favoring far more development.”

State estimates over the past decade, however, indicate that there’s plenty of already-designated vacant property in the county to “greatly exceed” any demand for new residential or commercial sites,

Buckley said.

Members of the Calaveras Planning Coalition (CPC), the flagship endeavor of the Community Action Project (CAP) have been providing public comments at board meetings urging them to adopt a General Plan that avoids “exactly this kind of litigation,” according to Jenny Fuqua, the coalition’s outreach coordinator, with reference to the Tuolumne County lawsuit.

CAP’s mission is to “protect and improve the natural and built environments in Calaveras County by empowering people to claim their rights and participate in local government.”

“If the county decides not to implement meaningful mitigation to the (over 24) significant impacts we identified in the Draft General Plan, they are not adopting a legally defensible General Plan for Calaveras County,” Fuqua told the Enterprise last week.

At a Jan. 22 meeting, the coalition submitted a 12-page memorandum to the Board of Supervisors listing the improvements needed in the General Plan Update and Draft EIR to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). These improvements would “promote economic development, ensure environmental protection, support the exercise of property rights, and secure outside funding to improve local conditions,” CPC Facilitator Tom Infusino wrote in the memo.
