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**PLANNING COMMISSION ASKS SUPERVISORS TO APPROVE  
INADEQUATE GENERAL PLAN**

**Still No Community Plans for Valley Springs, Arnold, and Murphys**

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**For Immediate Release**

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*San Andreas.* On Thursday, June 27, the Calaveras County Planning Commission recommended an updated General Plan to the Board of Supervisors for adoption. “In 2006, Calaveras County was forced to update its General Plan, because the County needs a General Plan that is legally defensible in order to foster growth and development. The plan just sent to the Board of Supervisors by the Planning Commission is not that plan,” said Tom Infusino, Facilitator of the Calaveras Planning Coalition.

The General Plan update was originally expected to take three years. As a grassroots volunteer driven organization, the Calaveras Planning Coalition has been participating in every phase of the general plan update for 13 long years in order to protect and improve the natural and built environments in Calaveras County.

“Unfortunately, with adoption finally imminent, priorities for implementing the general plan are still a mystery, and are likely to remain so,” Infusino noted. The plan calls for the Board of Supervisors to annually select implementation priorities for the coming year based upon the recommendations of the Planning Director. “This is critical,” said Infusino, “as many of the implementation measures in the General Plan Update are simply a promise to do more planning and program development at an unspecified time in the future.”

The biggest of these deferred implementation efforts will be reviewing and updating the County’s ordinances to deal with issues like light and glare, landscaping, historic centers, agritourism, noise, state fire safety regulations, grading, and mandatory connection to sewers.

While not necessarily associated with ordinance changes, there are a number of other implementation measures that also have no priority or deadline. With regard to public finances, the updated General Plan commits the County to an update of Road Impact Mitigation fees and Benefit Basin fees, the establishment of public facility impact fees, and the completion of capital facility plans. The updated General Plan also says the County will adopt a Recreation Master Plan and pursue park funding.

With regard to public safety, the final draft General Plan says the County will establish minimum level of service standards for emergency responders, law enforcement, water, sewer, fire protection, and other public facilities and services. In addition, the County will establish a comprehensive fire safety standards reference, a fire safety committee, evacuation plans for intermittent high occupancy uses like campgrounds, and a map of identified evacuation routes throughout the county.

However, when asked to identify the costs and personnel requirements for each of these tasks after General Plan adoption, Planning Director Peter Maurer indicated he was not sure that he could do so. Staff and funding requirements for these promised implementation measures will be identified only when and if they are selected by the Board of Supervisors as a priority for enactment.

Commissioners made many changes to the Resource Production Element and the Conservation and Open Space Element. Specific streamside setbacks for developments were removed in favor of setbacks recommended by the biologist hired by the developer to evaluate the project. Pending

development of a County mitigation plan, the detailed and comprehensive Oak Woodland mitigation implementation policy in the draft plan was deleted in favor of a measure that defers to the minimum required state mitigation.

Farmland conversion mitigation will be delayed pending the receipt of Department of Conservation mapping data, and there are no specified mitigation measures or ratios. Despite the fact that the Calaveras Agricultural Coalition provided mitigation guidelines to the County in 2011, mitigation for the conversion of Resource Production land has been deferred until the development of new guidelines, and there is no specified mitigation for use in the interim.

In addition, a number of general plan policies and implementation measures were limited in their application to discretionary projects subject to California Environmental Quality Act review. Therefore, it is unlikely that future ministerial approvals and by-right projects will be conditioned to assist the County in reducing impacts on oak woodlands, biological resources, riparian corridors, air pollution, and odors.

Although the Calaveras Planning Coalition submitted extensive written comments and had many people speak on each day of the hearings, the Commission refused most of the General Plan improvements offered by the CPC. Furthermore, the Commission refused to address CPC concerns regarding the inadequacy of the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR). Despite approximately 30 minutes of public testimony asking for the Commission to take 21 specific actions to correct the County's responses to comments in the FEIR, the Commission was silent on the subject. Despite a CPC memo and testimony explaining flaws in the FEIR impact analyses, flaws in the mitigation measures, and flaws in the alternatives analysis, the Commission was silent on those subjects as well.

In 2015 and 2016, the Board of Supervisors directed the Planning Department to eliminate the existing community plans for Valley Springs, Arnold, Murphys, and Avery/Hathaway Pines from the General Plan. None of the Supervisors who gave that direction are currently on the Board. While some current Planning Commissioners expressed their frustration with so many community plans being eliminated from the Community Planning Element, they refused to go against that earlier Board direction.

The Commission also refused to include the draft plans for Valley Springs (2017) and Copperopolis (2013) despite the recommendation of Planning Director Maurer in 2017 to adopt the Valley Springs draft plan. The Planning Commission has not acted on the Valley Springs plan since it was pulled from their agenda at the request of Supervisor Gary Tofanelli. While the Community Planning Element allows for additional community plans to be adopted in the future, no deadline has been set for such adoption.

Jenny Fuqua, the Outreach Coordinator for the Community Action Project, which is the parent organization of the Planning Coalition, lamented the loss of so many community plans, “Community plans give local residents a voice in maintaining and improving those features that make their communities a unique source of pride and joy to them. Each community has different challenges and opportunities. Our General Plan needs to recognize that.”

The latest version of the General Plan Update can be downloaded from the County’s website at <https://planning.calaverasgov.us/GP-Update>. You can direct your concerns regarding the plan to the Board of Supervisors at BoardClerk@co.calaveras.ca.us. The Board of Supervisors will consider the General Plan Update at a public hearing on July 30. Please come and speak. The future is depending on you.