

# Weekly ReCAP for September 25, 2020

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Next CPC meeting October 5, 2020 now starting at 3:00 p.m. to 5 p.m. Until the COVID-19 is resolved in our community, the CPC meetings will be held remotely by ZOOM and/or conference calling. To participate please watch for connection information from Jenny. New members are welcome, and members only will be able to participate in any closed session.

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**Next PC meeting October 8**

**Next BOS meeting October 13**

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## Is pick of sub-consultants for Zoning Ordinance good idea after General Plan?

- [By Muriel Zeller](#) / The Calaveras Enterprise
- Sep 16, 2020 Updated Sep 16, 2020

On Aug. 11, Planning Director Peter Maurer recommended that the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors hire the consulting firm of Mintier-Harnish to work as sub-consultants on the Zoning Ordinance Update despite the fact that Mintier-Harnish was released from its contract to update the Calaveras County General Plan in November 2012. The current board voted unanimously to approve a contract not to exceed \$169,798 with the lead consulting firm, Miller Planning Associates, and its sub-consultant, Mintier-Harnish.

According to the staff report, the services to be provided by Mintier-Harnish “under this agreement include public outreach, technical analysis, and legal consistency review.” Miller Planning Associates was the sole respondent to the Zoning Ordinance Update request for proposals, and the zoning update is one of the supervisors’ designated implementation priorities for the General Plan.

On the recommendation of then-Planning Director Rebecca Willis, the 2012 board fired Mintier-Harnish after five years and compared them to “bad mechanics.” Willis and the supervisors described the General Plan Update under Mintier-Harnish as a “death march” and a “shipwreck.” The public was told we need to remember the “lessons learned” from the Mintier-Harnish experience and, moving forward, the county would have to “fix the problems” inherited from that experience. It was alleged that Mintier-Harnish did not listen to the people during 20 public workshops or reflect the values and philosophy of Calaveras residents.

It is impossible to determine if the public would have agreed with the allegations made by Willis and the 2012 board. As the Calaveras Enterprise reported in a Feb. 5, 2016, article on attempts to make the Mintier-Harnish plan available, “Calaveras County officials have denied at least two Public Records Act requests – one from the Calaveras Planning Coalition and one from the Calaveras Enterprise – to access the draft general plan produced between 2006 and 2011 by the Mintier-Harnish planning consultant firm at a cost of more than \$900,000.”

A staff attorney with the California Newspaper Publishers Association was quoted in the article as saying, “... you’re probably not going to get this document unless you sue.” Though the county maintained the draft plan no longer existed in its original form, Mintier-Harnish had retained a copy of the document and offered to produce it.

Willis further alleged that Mintier-Harnish produced a background report that was so inaccurate that she had to hire Raney Planning & Management to redo it at a cost of \$50,000. As well as firing Mintier-Harnish during their November 2012 meeting, the board awarded Raney a \$300,000 contract to finish the General Plan Update, but Augustine Planning Associates was later added to the mix and paid \$114,000. When they were fired, Mintier-Harnish had been paid \$909,236.

Willis also alleged Mintier-Harnish wanted more than the \$144,000 left on their contract to finish the General Plan, which Mintier-Harnish denied in a letter to the board of supervisors after watching a videotape of the Nov. 13, 2012, board of supervisors meeting during which they were maligned. It should be noted that in that letter dated Dec. 11, 2012, Larry Mintier and Jim Harnish denied all of the county’s allegations and wrote, “We feel compelled to set the record straight in defense of our professional reputation and as a service to the current, past and future decision makers, and the people of Calaveras County.” Mintier-Harnish maintained their nearly completed draft General Plan could have been adopted “as early as Spring 2012.” Ultimately, a new plan was not adopted until Nov. 12, 2019.

The 2012 board, which included two current supervisors, Gary Tofanelli and Merita Callaway, disagreed on whether the incoming board or they should decide the fate of Mintier-Harnish. The vote to fire them was 3-2, but not one member of the 2012 board defended Mintier-Harnish. The current planning director is reported in the Enterprise article previously referenced to have also criticized the Mintier-Harnish draft plan, “Maurer said the version of the Mintier-Harnish draft he read had a lot of extraneous language, duplication of policies, and unsubstantive, feel-good statements with no real application.”

During last month’s meeting Supervisor Callaway asked to address the subject of hiring Mintier-Harnish again, which she referred to as “the tiger in the room.” Director Maurer acknowledged there is “some history,” but he didn’t know “all the details.” However, he is “quite confident” that Mintier-Harnish “has the capabilities to perform properly.”

Supervisor Tofanelli provided more detailed remarks at the recent meeting and said, “The general plan they (Mintier-Harnish) put together didn’t even come close to the direction they were given ... And then there were change orders that totaled an astronomical amount of money.” He’s hoping that doesn’t happen this time and that Mintier-Harnish will follow the direction of the board and that we don’t “end

up with a product that we paid a lot of money for but cannot use,” nor, I would add, a product the public is not allowed to see. Tofanelli concluded, “So just a warning going forward.”

Thus, we are governed.

*Muriel Zeller is a poet and grant writer. She is a member of the Calaveras Community Action Project Governing Committee which administers the Calaveras Planning Coalition. Contact her at [murielzeller52@gmail.com](mailto:murielzeller52@gmail.com).*

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## **RCRC – The Barbed Wire – September 18, 2020**

### **Bill of the Week: Senate Bill 1159 (Hill) - Workers’ Compensation: COVID-19: Critical Workers**

Throughout the 2020 Legislative Session, RCRC and a large coalition of stakeholders expressed strong concerns with efforts to provide enhanced workers’ compensation benefits to persons who are not classified as public safety personnel in light of COVID-19. A number of legislative measures were put forth to provide a worker with a rebuttable presumption when claiming a COVID-19 illness. As such, Senate Bill 1159, authored by Senator Jerry Hill (D- San Mateo), was put forth as the primary legislative measure to make changes to the workers’ compensation system, including a rebuttable presumption. Initially, RCRC joined a coalition to raise concerns about the costs of the enhanced benefit and the functionality of the outbreak-based presumption trigger contained in SB 1159.

The coalition requested changes to address these specific concerns with SB 1159. The amendments offered by the coalition attempted to address the significant administrative burden for employers while leaving the fundamental policy direction of the bill intact. Even though these amendments were not incorporated, SB 1159 easily secured passage in the Legislature. And, on Thursday, SB 1159 was signed into law by Governor Newsom.

### **Hometown California and the 2020 National Election: The Race for the White House, Battle for Control of the U.S. Senate, and What’s in Play for the House of Representatives**

*Hometown California* is kicking off the 2020 Election season with Leah Askarinam, Hotline Editor-in-Chief of the National Journal in Washington D.C. in a three-part series focused on the November National Election.

In the **first** episode, our host, Paul A. Smith, speaks with Leah about the 2020 Race for the White House. Examining polling trends and the current national climate, Leah and Paul provide a state-by-state look at the Electoral College and discuss the likelihood of President Trump's ability to win the

White House and whether President Trump could lose the popular vote and still win the presidency. As you listen in to this insightful conversation, grab a pen and paper if you want to keep up with the math of the election map. You can download a printable election map [here](#). ([Download episode](#))

Released today, the **second** episode in the series examines the battle for control of the United States Senate, with special focus on key races happening in California. ([Download now](#))

Subscribe today on your favorite podcast service so you don't miss the series conclusion when Leah and Paul discuss what's in play for the House of Representatives.

For more about the National Journal, check it out on the web here: [nationaljournal.com](http://nationaljournal.com)

## **President Trump Visits California to See Wildfires**

On Monday, President Trump traveled to California to receive a briefing on the response efforts to the recent wildfires engulfing the state and region. President Trump blamed the devastation on a failure of state officials to manage their forests and cast doubt on the science on climate change and its role in exacerbating the fires. During his visit, the President argued that forest mismanagement was the primary culprit for catastrophic fires in recent years, telling officials they should "clean" the forest floors to safeguard forests from dry leaves and fallen, "explosive" trees that ignite "like a matchstick." Washington Governor Jay Inslee provided a stark counter opinion to the President for his comments redirecting blame for the wildfires away from climate change, "it is maddening right now that when we have this cosmic challenge to our communities, with the entire West Coast of the United States on fire, to have a president to deny that ... these are climate fires."

## **Senator Feinstein's Wildfire Legislation**

On Wednesday, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee [held a hearing](#) that included Senator Dianne Feinstein's *Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act of 2020* ([S. 4431](#)). The bipartisan bill, introduced by Senator Feinstein and Senator Steve Daines (R-Montana), would help protect communities from catastrophic wildfires by implementing wildfire mitigation projects, sustaining healthier forests that are more resilient to climate change and providing important energy and retrofitting assistance to businesses and residences to mitigate future risks from wildfire. During the Committee hearing, Senator Daines stressed the importance of passing the bill, stating "we are at a critical time. The West is burning. People are dying. And our way of life as we know it is in danger... My bill with Senator Feinstein offers 53 pages worth of solutions." Senator Daines also thanked first responders, law enforcement, fire officials and more for their work battling the fires across the West, and he held a moment of silence for those who lost their lives because of the fires. RCRC has indicated its strong support for Senator Feinstein's legislation. The RCRC support letter can be viewed [here](#).

## **Coronavirus Relief Negotiations**

On Tuesday, a bipartisan group of about 50 lawmakers in the House of Representatives unveiled [their own coronavirus \(COVID-19\) relief plan](#) in a new effort to revive coronavirus stimulus negotiations.

The Problem Solvers Caucus, comprised of centrist Democrats and Republicans, proposed a \$1.52 trillion package, though up to \$2 trillion could be available if coronavirus conditions worsen. The “March to Common Ground” proposal includes another round of \$1,200 stimulus checks, \$100 billion for COVID-19 testing, \$500 billion for state and local governments, \$15 billion for the United States Postal Service, and \$12 billion for broadband hotspots in underserved communities. The package also includes supplemental unemployment insurance at \$450 per week for the first eight weeks, then provide up to \$600 per week after that but capped at 100 percent of a person’s salary. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) reiterated on Tuesday that Democrats should stand firm in their funding demands and said she could agree to a \$2.2 trillion package but would go no lower.

Additionally, Speaker Pelosi said on Wednesday that the House should remain in session until lawmakers can strike a bipartisan agreement on new coronavirus relief. Meanwhile, the Senate is currently scheduled to leave after the first week of October. But Senate Majority Whip John Thune (R-South Dakota) suggested Tuesday that the Senate could leave earlier if it passes a continuing resolution next week to fund the government past September 30<sup>th</sup> and if COVID-19 talks remain at an impasse.

### **Government Funding Legislation to Avoid a Shutdown**

The main order of congressional business for the remainder of September is to enact a continuing resolution (CR) – an extension of current government funding – before funding expires at the end of this fiscal year on September 30<sup>th</sup>. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Maryland) said he would like the House of Representatives to pass a CR next week, giving the U.S. Senate up to a full week to vote on the bill. House Democratic leadership and the Trump Administration have agreed to keep the CR clean of controversial policy provisions – a “clean CR” - including pandemic relief. Funding for most programs will be frozen at current levels, but the big decision remaining is how long the extension will last. It is largely believed that the extension will likely last until around December 18<sup>th</sup>, but some Democrats are pushing to have the extension last until Spring, leaving it to a new Congress and possibly a new Administration to finalize fiscal year 2021 funding levels.

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## **Calaveras Public Health reports 1 death and 7 new cases of COVID-19**

**Sep 20, 2020 / The Calaveras Enterprise**

*The following press release was issued by Calaveras County Public Health.*

On Friday, September 18, 2020, Calaveras Public Health confirmed 1 new death and 7 new cases of COVID-19 in Calaveras County. The latest fatality was a male over the age of 65 who resided in

District 1. The individual tested positive for the virus and was unable to recover. HIPAA privacy rules regulate the sharing of protected health information. No additional information is available about this individual.

“Our thoughts are with the family and friends who lost a loved one from COVID-19,” said Dr. Dean Kelaita, Calaveras County Health Officer. “We must make every effort to slow the spread of the virus and protect our most vulnerable people. Practice physical distancing, wear a face covering, get tested, wash your hands often, stay home if you are sick, and avoid any gatherings especially where physical distancing and masking is not being followed.”

The seven additional cases being reported include one male between 50 to 64 years of age and six females over 65 years of age. Six cases are being reported in District 1. One case is being reported in District 4. There were no new cases being reported in Districts 2, 3, and 5.

Of the seven new cases being reported, six cases are linked to an outbreak among residents of Avalon Health Care San Andreas. Testing at Avalon now includes rapid antigen testing for residents and staff. Rapid testing can provide results in about 15 minutes, allowing for faster isolation of potentially infected people to help prevent further transmission of the virus to others. Avalon infection control staff continue to work closely with Calaveras Public Health in consultation with the California Department of Public Health to control the outbreak. Monitoring and tracking of any new cases of COVID-19 among residents and staff at Avalon Health Care is ongoing.

Calaveras County remains among California Counties where the county risk level is substantial. This means that some indoor business operations are allowed to proceed with specific modifications. Calaveras Public Health urges people to help the county lower its risk by taking necessary steps to prevent being exposed to the virus.

Calaveras Public Health reported one jurisdictional transfer of a previous case to another county. The case has been removed from local COVID-19 case counts. To date, Calaveras Public Health reports a total of 311 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Of those cases, 280 cases have since recovered while 17 cases remain active. There have been a total of 14 confirmed deaths related to COVID-19 reported in Calaveras County.

Calaveras Public Health staff continues to investigate new cases to determine any possible persons who may have had close personal contact with the positive individuals. Close contacts may be contacted by the health department, assessed and monitored for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 illness.

Everyone is at risk for getting COVID-19 if they are exposed to the virus. Some people are more likely than others to become severely ill. This means that they may need to be hospitalized, require a ventilator to help them breathe, or they may even die. Older adults and people with underlying medical conditions are at increased risk for severe illness and death from COVID-19.

The best ways to avoid exposure to the virus are to:

- Stay home if you are sick
- Stay at least 6 feet away from people outside of your household
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Wear a face covering over your nose and mouth when around others

Symptoms can appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting

Look for emergency warning signs for COVID-19. If someone is showing signs, seek emergency care immediately:

- Trouble breathing
- New confusion or weakness
- Bluish lips or face
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- Inability to wake or stay awake

No-cost testing for COVID-19 is available to anyone who would like to get tested. The OptumServe COVID-19 testing site located at the Calaveras County Fairgrounds is open Tuesday-Saturday from 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. Testing is available to those age 3 and older. People are highly encouraged to register online. People without Internet access should call (888) 634-1123. To receive information and resources related to COVID-19 visit the Calaveras County COVID-19 website.

It's likely that flu viruses and coronavirus (COVID-19) will both spread this fall and winter. Our local healthcare system could become overwhelmed treating both patients with flu and patients with COVID-19. Getting a flu vaccine this year is more important than ever. While getting a flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19, there are many benefits to getting it. Flu vaccines have been shown to reduce the risk of flu illness, hospitalization, and death. Getting a flu vaccine can also save healthcare resources for the care of patients with COVID-19. Prevent flu this fall and winter. Join us on October 15th from 9AM-4PM at Calaveras High School for a no-cost drive thru flu clinic for those 10 years of

age and older. The event is a collaboration between Calaveras Public Health and Dignity Health Mark Twain Medical Center.

**To receive information and resources related to COVID-19 visit the Calaveras County COVID-19 website.**

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## **VUSD, CUSD will begin to reopen campuses in coming weeks**

- [by Dakota Morlan](#) / The Calaveras Enterprise
- Sep 23, 2020 Updated Sep 23, 2020

Vallecito Union School District (VUSD) and Calaveras Unified School District (CUSD) students will have the option of returning to campuses for onsite instruction beginning, for some, as early as Sept. 28.

The VUSD school board voted unanimously to gradually reopen its three school sites on a normal schedule during a Sept. 16 board meeting.

Per the reopening plan, which can be viewed on the [district's website](#), some lower grades and sixth grade will be the first to return on Sept. 28, while all remaining grades up to eighth grade will be fully on campus by Oct. 5.

Shortly before Wednesday's meeting, a petition signed by 117 parents was brought before the board, requesting that onsite instruction be offered to students.

Mother of two VUSD students Brianna Inks wrote the petition, along with her sister and fellow VUSD parent Becca Kane, while several other parents helped collect signatures.

Inks, who works from home, said she hoped to make it clear to the board that there were many parents who wanted their children to return to school. She cited concerns about the struggles of working parents and children not being adequately educated or socialized in a distance learning setting.

"Face-to-face is best," Inks said. "We want our kids to be in school, and we don't have that option at this time. I understand that there are some families who do not want to be in school at this time, and that's perfectly fine."

Under the VUSD reopening plan, parents will have the option of sending their children back to campus, homeschooling through the district's Vallecito Home School Academy Program or continuing with a distance learning program, provided by the district through a vendor.

"It should be noted that the current distance-learning model delivered by the district's classroom teachers would not likely be available as an option as teachers cannot facilitate in-person and online learning," the plan reads.



Students who return to campus will remain in a “cohort” or a classroom group for learning, lunch, recess and play, utilizing staggered schedules to prevent contact with other cohorts. With some exceptions for those who cannot tolerate masks, students will be required to wear a face mask while on campus, and the district will provide PPE free of charge to students and staff if needed.

The 31-page reopening plan, which takes guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, also includes daily health screenings for staff, contact tracing for positive COVID-19 tests, and strict stay-home policies for symptomatic students.

VUSD was the first school district in Calaveras County to announce plans to reopen campuses. However, Calaveras Unified School District (CUSD) – the county's largest district – followed suit Tuesday evening when its board voted unanimously to return to campuses Oct. 12 with a 50% blended program model (50% of students on alternating days, four days a week).

Their decision followed a peaceful demonstration at the four-way intersection of Highway 26 and Highway 12 in Valley Springs, where CUSD parents and students weathered smoky air on Monday to support a safe return to campuses.

“It’s very difficult. They are not made to sit in a chair for two hours in front of a computer. This is the time they are supposed to be interacting with their peers, making friends and learning everything they are supposed to learn. It’s hard,” Chloe Cox, parent of a CUSD kindergartener who is doing distance learning, told the Enterprise at the demonstration. “Everything that he is learning is given from the teachers, but it’s the parents teaching. There is so much that needs to be learned in a classroom, not from mom and dad.”

Calaveras High School senior Abby Porath said that learning from home has put a strain on students’ mental health.

“It’s been hard. You’re at home all day and you’re not really doing anything,” Porath said. “And when you do go out into the outside world, you still have to wear a mask and you have to follow all these rules. You are not getting the whole experience. Sitting at home all day doing homework isn’t the ideal situation when it’s your last year in high school.”

A student athlete, Porath thinks her class has gotten the “short end of the stick” in finishing out their high school careers.

“It is our last childhood experience. It’s the last thing you get before getting filled with college, bills and a house. It’s the last thing of your childhood that’s getting ripped away from you. It’s hard for everyone,” she said.

The final two school districts to reopen campuses in the county will be Mark Twain Union Elementary School District (MTUESD) and Bret Hart Union High School District (BHUHSD). The MTUESD school board will vote on the matter Wednesday, while BHUHSD superintendent told the Enterprise on Tuesday that the district was still “gathering information and determining our options.”

County Superintendent of Schools Scott Nanik has stated that he is in favor of students returning to campus, as long as it can be done safely.

“The enrollment at these schools is such that they have the physical space on campus to ensure proper social distancing and are able to meet all the (California Department of Public Health) guidance,” Nanik said.

According to Nanik, moving into a more restrictive tier in the state’s COVID-19 monitoring system should not cause county schools to shut down again, unless there is a significant outbreak on a campus.

“Under the Tier system, once a school is open it may stay open unless it has (a) COVID-19 infection that meets the closure requirements. Even if we were moved to the Purple Tier on the (Sept. 29), both these schools would remain open. While the state has some closure thresholds for an infection, it really will be more of a case-by-case basis working with our local public health. Yes, it could be possible for schools, grades or classrooms to move in and out of distance learning based on the case,” Nanik said.

*Reporter Guy Dossi contributed to this article.*

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## **Supervisors pass Valley Springs community plan**

### **Ordinance to cut red tape for building in rural areas out for review**

- [By Davis Harper](#) / The Calaveras Enterprise
- Sep 23, 2020

It took more than a decade of controversial planning efforts for a new Valley Springs community plan to make it before the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors Tuesday. With little discussion, the board approved it unanimously.

While the county’s General Plan is the framework that governs development for the whole county, the Community Planning element in the General Plan allows for individual communities to set specific policies within that larger framework to address the long-term vision for an area. Supervisors adopted a General Plan update in November of 2019 that excluded community plans for the areas of Valley Springs and Copperopolis.

Updating a community plan written in 1974 for Valley Springs has been a controversial undertaking since 2008, when the Calaveras Council of Governments (CCOG) received a Caltrans grant to develop a new plan with considerable community involvement.

The inclusion of Rancho Calaveras in that plan was a major item of contention, and the area has since been removed from the plan boundaries.

In response, District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli and a small ad hoc committee of residents he appointed that did not agree with the “content and direction” of the CCOG plan formed their own alternative plan.

Before supervisors Tuesday was a blend of those two plans, amended and approved by the Planning Commission in August.

The vision is to preserve Valley Springs' "small-town rural atmosphere, framed by open space vistas, agricultural lands, mature oak trees and woodlands, rolling hills with tree-covered ridgelines, Castle Rock, Valley Springs Peak" and other features.

"Wildlife will continue to inhabit the surrounding areas and coexist with local residents in peaceful, quiet neighborhoods," the plan reads. "Valley Springs' historic core will evolve into a prosperous, walkable mixed-use district, preserving and building upon its original 18-block grid and cultural heritage as a farming, ranching and late-1800s railroad town. The Town Center ... will serve as a focal point for parks and recreation, tourism, commerce, public institutions and public space for community interaction, while remaining a safe, attractive rural community."

Large-scale industrial and retail buildings are generally unwelcome, and new residential development will protect open space and buffer lands, as well as historic and natural site features and resources, per the plan.

Transportation planning will be "safe and effective" for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists and will "honor Valley Springs' natural surroundings, agricultural and ranching heritage, creeks and floodplains, and respond to surrounding community needs, from rural edges to residential neighborhoods to the Town Center."

Supervisors, working with Planning Director Peter Maurer, made minor adjustments to the plan Tuesday before approval.

"This is really well-drafted and I want to thank the planning commission and you for all the work you've done, along with all the stakeholders over the years ..." said Ben Stopper, supervisor for district 5, which is partially included in the plan boundaries.

Stopper's minor stipulation was to include the word, "encourage" in a policy about limiting development on steep hillsides and hilltops.

Tofanelli made the motion, and Stopper made the second to approve the plan.

"Thank you so much for all the hard work over the many years putting this together ... I'm sure it's one thing that you'd like to close the book on," Tofanelli said to Maurer.

The Calaveras Planning Coalition, a community planning group, sued the county over its General Plan update in December of 2019, citing a lack of clear deadlines for implementation of approximately 120 mitigation measures listed in the plan, including the excluded community plans.

"I'm glad to see the county moving forward with this," said coalition member Joyce Techel of the Valley Springs Community Plan. "As development takes place, some things will be addressed that wouldn't have been addressed if the plan wasn't there. Is it perfect? No, but not much is."

### **Other business**

Supervisors authorized for public review an ordinance to help increase affordable, low-density housing stock in unincorporated parts of the county not within community plan or Homeowners Association (HOA) boundaries.

The ordinance would make special building permits available to allow alternate design and construction standards, such as using owner-generated materials like lumber from a timber harvest, an affordable option not available under county building codes.

Builders would also be exempted from certain provisions of the Title 25, California Code of Regulations relating to fire safety and energy conservation to reduce building costs.

Such an exemption only applies to those building on their own land for themselves or their family members, with permits valid for a minimum of three years. Butte Fire survivors that lost their homes in the 2015 blaze have been asking supervisors to take action on building costs for years.

“The replacement of homes and restoration of the communities impacted by the Butte wildfire has placed an unprecedented financial burden upon the populations of these rural areas and has contributed to the County’s increasing struggles with homelessness and substandard housing,” the draft ordinance reads. “This ordinance will facilitate the availability of affordable, owner-built, owner-occupied homes which still meet minimum state law safety requirements.”

Also contributing to the need for the ordinance are a prevalence of low-income households in remote areas, a hilly topography making it more expensive to connect remote homes to “traditional infrastructure,” and increasing costs of California construction requirements.

The ordinance is “in no way designed” to be used for rentals, employee housing or anything else where one person is controlling another’s living conditions, Chief Building Official Doug Oliver emphasized.

He added that it also does not allow for new buildings to be substandard.

Oliver, the former building inspector for Tuolumne County, said this kind of ordinance has been in the queue for him for 10 years, since the housing crisis escalated.

“I’m excited to get this done,” he said.

Tofanelli was the only supervisor to vote against summary publication of the ordinance, citing the exclusion of HOAs.

Oliver said including HOAs could potentially open up the county to having to enforce other covenants and restrictions.

In public comment, Terry Weatherby, a structural engineer based in Jackson, praised Oliver’s work in getting the ordinance finished.

Weatherby said costly state requirements for sprinklers and solar panels in new buildings make it “harder for us to build.”

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