

Community Meetings

West Ranch Area

September 21, 2009 – 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
Rancho Pico Middle School

Castaic Area

September 24, 2009 – 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
Castaic Middle School

Summary Notes

By Allison Sampson, Facilitator (www.allisonsampson.com)

Prepared

By

Allison Sampson Management Consultants



Sponsored by the Castaic Area and West Ranch Town Councils
Any and all questions will be answered at the meeting

I. OPENING REMARKS

Allison Sampson, facilitator for these meetings, introduced the presenter, Beverly Burr of Burr Consulting Firm. Allison provided background on the firm and its involvement with various urban issues throughout L.A. County. Allison explained that the public review draft of *Annexation Fiscal Analysis: West Ranch, Castaic & Tesoro*, dated September 18, 2009, for the City of Santa Clarita and the respective town councils, was only available one business day before the convening of this meeting. After discussion with all parties, the town councils believed it was best to have this meeting rather than cancel it.

Residents will have another opportunity to question this plan on October 8 at Santa Clarita City Hall in the Council chambers, where an open forum with media will take place. The panel forum will be videotaped and also broadcast. Allison reminded the community meeting attendees that the vote in November is advisory. In addition, Allison reminded the community participants that the issue surrounding schools is not impacted by this discussion of either annexation, incorporation of new cities, or keeping its status quo as a part of the County. Therefore, it might save participants' time not to address this on the question cards.

Participants were reminded that these notes should be posted on the following websites and questions can be addressed as well on blogs on these websites:

www.castaicareatowncouncil.org
www.westranchtowncouncil.com
www.mycastaic.com
www.westranchbeacon.com

For the benefit of both town councils, the notes of September 21 and 24 were combined in this document to give a fuller view for each community. There were several overlapping questions and issues which will be of interest to both communities.

Following a 25-minute PowerPoint presentation by Burr Consulting, a dialogue took place at both meetings addressing these representative topics:

- **Patrol car increase?**
Burr Consulting responded that 40 of the 88 cities in this County contract with the Sheriff's Department. Santa Clarita is one of them. The study based its analysis of other similar cities and their costs. In addition, there was discussion about "enhanced law enforcement" programs such as gang prevention, which are currently provided by the County. It is unknown at this time whether those programs would be affected, but it appears most likely that they would not, as they are county-wide programs.

- **Signature efforts:**

Two neighborhoods did a signature effort for annexation. These two areas are awaiting further action depending on the vote. The clarification of the study area includes the old Ralph's, east of the I-5 freeway. All clarification about the study area should be addressed with the City of Santa Clarita.

- **Alimony payment?**

Beverly presented an explanation of the "alimony payment" to the County. LAFCO determines this in negotiation. Participants in the community meeting were referred to Table 8-9 in the report about fiscal impact. The study includes Pitchess to even out some of the funding gaps.

The study is based on fiscal year 2006/07. In addition, there was analysis for growth projections and inflation when assuming what the possible range of the alimony payment might be.

DURING THE DIALOGUE, THERE WAS A DIFFERENCE OF AN OPINION ON THE COUNTY GAP CALCULATIONS IN THE STUDY. COUNTY REPRESENTATION ALLUDED TO AN \$11 MILLION GAP, AND THE BURR CONSULTING REPORT ALLUDES TO A \$6 MILLION GAP. THE COUNTY AND THE CONSULTANT ACKNOWLEDGED A DISAGREEMENT ON THESE NUMBERS. FURTHER INFORMATION IS BEING PROVIDED TO THE CONSULTANT TO REVIEW THEIR OPINION ON THE MATTER.

TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT, PARKS ARE ALSO DIFFERING IN OPINION BETWEEN THE COUNTY AND THE STUDY.

ROAD REVENUE, OR PROP C FUNDS, ARE ALSO AN AREA IN WHICH THERE IS A DIFFERENCE. MTA AWARDS WERE MENTIONED AS WELL AS THE GAP ISSUE AND THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS.

- **Representation?**

Beverly explained that there would be various commissions which are negotiable, but not large districts. Representation is elected at large with a 20 to 25% vote. Elections are rotating, which depends on the timing of the annexation process.

- **Code Enforcement Service Levels?**

Data from the County is pending. The question remains, does the City actually spend more than the County on code enforcement. This is a follow-up item.

The consultant encouraged participants to explore parking rules with the City leadership. At this point, this is an unknown.

Land entitlement is not affected per the study. There is not a significant effect on planning as there is joint planning now.

- **Recycling Facility?**

This is an unknown issue at this time. A City of Santa Clarita representative mentioned that zoning issues will also have an impact. He also cited the Canyon Country example in which a recycling center was voted down by residents and therefore canceled.

- **Traffic Light Synchronization?**

The consultant referred participants to page 55. The report will be modified with new County data.

- **County Parks Within City Limits?**

The consultant referred participants to page 50 of the study. There are regional parks such as Hart. The study asserts that park issues would have no material impact or change.

Recreation program fees were questioned. It is unknown as to the fee question. Residents were encouraged to check with each program.

The study deals with park acreage per capita in various ways including usable space. This is defined by the County and City to control development. The study used the 3% slope or greater, which is the current definition of the City. The County has a slightly different definition, but the study used the City's definition.

- **Downsides to Annexation?**

The consultant explained that each voter should evaluate the service levels of services they care most about as a resident. She encouraged participants to read the government services report.

The following is a list of representative sample questions that were asked by the participants. There were several questions by County employees. Those asked by the County are indicated with an asterisk.

**The analysis for road revenue assumes \$1.2 million in an annual allocation of Prop C discretionary funds. Since this is a competitive funding source solely up to MTA's discretion, how would the gap be financed if MTA does not award the Prop C funds?*

**Please explain why the AFA is not explicit that excess County road revenues cannot be used to offset the impact of the County General Fund.*

**Does the estimated law enforcement expenditures of \$4.3 million include traffic enforcement and park patrol? If not, what is the estimate for these additional service costs and service level?*

How is the needed increase in patrol cars shown?

**The AFA does not include all of the County departments to calculate the total expenditures on code enforcement. Why were these not combined and then compared to the City's total expenditures on code enforcement?*

**The City has one division in charge of all code enforcement while the County has several departments involved in code enforcement, i.e., animal control, fire, public health, public works and regional planning.*

**17 signals in Castaic are not synchronized, however, the report did not indicate that these signals are either isolated or too far apart to be synchronized. Why was this information omitted from the report?*

**Why does the AFA give credit to the City for the following County-owned, maintained and operated facilities: Chesebrough, Northbridge and William S. Hart Park?*

**The County provided information on park programs and services that demonstrated County programs were provided at a lesser cost to constituents as compared to similar City programs. Why is that information excluded from the AFA?*

If annexed to Santa Clarita, would the City be able to put a materials recycling facility in Castaic if we don't want one?

How would annexation impact the existing and proposed entitlements of our land? Are the City zoning and development standards different from the County? If so, how.

Do you anticipate any new rules for parking?

There were two neighborhoods that took signatures needed to annex. Why not let the two neighborhoods be annexed?

As a Castaic resident, what are the downsides to annexation? Is it a fiscal benefit for residents and businesses and allows us to vote in City elections? Why would we not want that?

If annexed to Santa Clarita, would Castaic and the Westside communities be guaranteed representation on the Santa Clarita City Council? Do we have representatives from our districts?

Why does the map misrepresent Tesoro as an area east of the I-5? It does not interface with Castaic boundary?

Is the lake and the old area of Castaic in the City like the old Ralph's?

If we are no longer part of L.A. County, what impact will that have on our existing CSD's you refer to?

Why is the Commerce Center called Valencia?

**Explain how inclusion or exclusion of development projects such as Newhall Ranch, Lion's Canyon, and Tapia Ranch developments would affect the fiscal feasibility of the annexation.*

Will the annexation include all of Castaic or just certain parts of the City that Santa Clarita wants?

**Can you explain the gap of \$5.2 million between the County's determined fiscal asset to the General Fund and the AFA study? How will the City of Santa Clarita meet this gap?*

How will pay the alimony, and will it be passed on to Castaic residents?

- **Castaic?**
The consultant responded to several questions about the Castaic area. For many participants, the study was unclear for them. Their concern was that Castaic could get voted in while others remain status quo. The consultant responded that Pitchess is probably desirable to annex. Also, the consultant explained that the County has no incentive for annexation and that the County is completely neutral.
- **The Study**
The consultant explained that the City contracted her firm for this study and the compensation was \$25,000.
- **Political/Elected Representation?**
The annexation of all areas increases population by 20%. Residents vote for five Council members. The Council appoints the Mayor. The Council has not stated its own position on this at this time. The Council will choose an option that makes the most sense. The Council is still at the early stages of analyzing what negotiations could yield. There is no position yet. The position will be determined on where the widest benefit is.
- **How Will Voting Take Place?**
The vote in November is advisory. Inmates do not vote, only residents. November's ballot also deals with schools and community colleges.
- **Fiscal Impact of Annexation?**

The bottom line on annexation is all about services. Pitchess is a factor in road maintenance. Street funding is based on population numbers. Therefore, low density outlying areas are affected. Code enforcement should have zero impact. Streets should also have zero impact. The permitting process is unknown. The traffic impact is also unknown. The bottom line on taxes is also unknown as it is negotiable on some items. The annexation cannot do “cherry picking” of areas. There will be a prioritization of areas during an annexing process given a timeline for annexing portions at a time.

Will an annexation create new ordinances that would be more or less restrictive to business start-up?

On page 50 of the AFA, park acres are listed as 2,355, but later in the report it's noted as [70.4?] acres as “usable.” What does that mean?

There is a landscaping district of approximately \$500 per year—what would happen if annexation takes place to that fee?

After annexation, how many cities are larger in L.A. County? Would not the City of Santa Clarita with a larger population have more influence?

Would annexation or incorporation be most likely to improve the old road intersection in [Rye?] Canyon traffic flow?

How does Castaic being annexed benefit the City of Santa Clarita? Do taxes go up or down? Do services increase up or down?

Does the study suggest areas to annex first, second or third? What is that suggestion based on?

What would be the fiscal impact by the creation of a new city government?

What is the County's incentive to let us go? Who prompted the town councils and city to initiate this study and who paid for it?

If the town of Castaic votes to annex, will the City ensure that all of Castaic will be annexed?

Can Castaic be voted in for annexation while Tesoro and West Ranch vote for status quo?

What would be the impact if Tesoro and Pitchess were not considered?

Has the City of Santa Clarita discussed representation on the City Council? (They don't seem very welcoming to those of us west of the 5.)

How will elected officials and voting processes change with the three options?

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