



Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc.

Post Office Box 353, Agoura Hills, California 91301



"The voice and conscience of the Santa Monica Mountains since 1968"

04-14-11

NEWS WATCH

New Calabasas City Council Sends Old Topanga Sewer EIR Packing

What a difference a Mayor makes!

Thanks to Mayor James Bozajian, who wasted no time in agendizing the discussion, the Calabasas City Council, in a unanimous vote, sent the City's Old Topanga Sewer EIR packing last night. Both Mayor Bozajian and Councilmember Mary Sue Maurer had previously expressed their opposition to sewerage up the rural community of Old Topanga.

New Councilmembers Lucy Martin and Fred Gaines added fresh blood to the mix—and Councilmember Jonathon Wolfson also voted with the block, changing the atmosphere at City Hall.

Council directed staff to suspend work on the EIR indefinitely and terminate the agreement with Rincon Consultants, thus confirming that a sewer extension is not desired and will no longer be pursued by the City.

Councilmember Gaines noted the City's General Plan language may need to be clarified as well.

The Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation has long been opposed to the unnecessary and costly consideration of sewer installation into the rural community of Old Topanga and to wasting taxpayer dollars on the unwanted project's required EIR.

In terminating the EIR, Calabasas taxpayers will save tens of thousands of dollars immediately. Of the initial \$100,000 contract cost estimate, EIR expenditures to date total about \$60,000, leaving a balance of \$40,000 in immediate savings. The \$100,000

would have escalated substantially as the EIR process evolved and as the need to address new issues, hold scoping meetings, etc. continued.

Additionally, an EIR has a certain shelf life; it doesn't remain valid for an unlimited period of time. Any significant effects, substantial changes or new information that came up would have necessitated revisions or a SEIR, which would have required spending more money.

The upcoming potential designation of Old Topanga Canyon Road as not just a local and state historic landmark, but as a National Historic Landscape, also merits consideration. The National Registry requires that historic landscapes retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance. To qualify and maintain this status, this segment of Old Topanga Canyon Road needs to retain its integrity of location, setting, design, feeling and association.

Suspending the Old Topanga EIR process saved the City's financial resources from being further depleted by millions of taxpayer dollars for unwarranted sewers.

There are approximately 1.2 million septic systems statewide, and Old Topanga's meager 40 systems are surrounded by thousands of others in neighboring communities. These few systems can be repaired, maintained and routinely inspected for a fraction of the cost of sewer installation. At the same time, this historic neighborhood can be respected for its rural characteristics and protected from overdevelopment.

Jody Thomas, president of the Old Topanga Homeowners Inc., said, "we are thrilled with the decision made and look forward to a more positive future with the new City Council under the thoughtful leadership of Mayor James Bozajian. We are most appreciative of the overwhelming support shown by residents from communities throughout and surrounding the City."

A fresh breeze blew into City Hall last night. Residents were also given three minutes to speak and treated with respect and courtesy by Mayor Bozajian. This is a far cry from the one minute handed out begrudgingly by former Mayor Barry Groveman who routinely insulted and bullied residents coming to testify.

We appreciate the change in tone. Stay tuned.