

C.V. residents: Trails plan could lower property values

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Carmel Valley residents who oppose a controversial trails plan may request that their properties be left out of the process, the Board of Supervisors decided yesterday.

Property owners who packed the supervisors' chambers objected that the trails plan, prepared by the Carmel Valley Trails Committee, could hurt property values just by its existence.

"You may be depriving people of vested property rights by even putting this out in print," said attorney Myron Etienne, who opposed the plan.

The plan describes a system of proposed riding and hiking trails throughout the valley, connecting various neighborhoods, schools, parks, recreational facilities and other destinations.

Board Chairman Tom Perkins said the supervisors would not be making a final decision yesterday, but "merely a procedural effort to move forward."

And on a motion from Supervisor Sam Karas, the board directed the county Planning Department to review the trails plan and report back in 45 days with recommendations about environmental impacts, liability, and other issues raised by the plan — including how trail maintenance would be financed.

At the suggestion of Supervisor Judy Pennycook, the board also

advised Carmel Valley property owners that they could tell the Planning Department not to include their properties in the plan if they opposed the trails.

The department should set up "a process of showing where we cannot go," Pennycook said.

Etienne, noting "widespread opposition" to the proposed plan, said the county staff shouldn't spend a lot of time on it. Property owners have valid reasons for objecting to having trails drawn across their properties on a county map, he said.

Karas, however, said the citizens' committee had worked long and hard on the plan, and the board should "allow the report to be made, for God's sake ... before we rush to judgment on this."

"Everybody is not happy in Carmel Valley," said Alan Williams, a developer and property owner. "There's a lot of frustration in this room today," he said, because of the committee's action in putting "trails wherever they want to without taking care of the consequences."

The trails plan would serve special interests at the expense of property owners, Williams said.

"We are not approving anything," Perkins said. "It's merely in the draft stage."

Public meetings to explain the plan and its implementation will be held in Carmel Valley, Planning Director Robert Slimmon said.