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Council Hears Zoning Update

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The possible rezoning of the familiar "Christmas tree lot" property at the corner of Deer Hill Road and Pleasant Hill Road was less about substance than having a say during a lightly attended April 9 Lafayette City Council meeting. City Attorney Mala Subramanian read a prepared zoning update statement to the Council that described a brief history of the parcels along Deer Hill Road.

An application for development was received for a large multi-family project called the Terraces of Lafayette in the midst of city-sponsored discussions about possible down-zoning. Because the city is required to process the application, which includes an environmental review, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is expected to be completed by late April that will outline impacts of the proposed development.

"The data collected for the environmental review will likely provide new and useful information for the city as it makes final determinations regarding the most appropriate zoning designation for the property," said Subramanian in her report to the City Council. Any action on zoning will have to wait for the completed EIR, and a subsequent thorough review.

The controversial project already has neighbors concerned. Traci Reilly said the process described in the staff report, "wasn't an accurate depiction of what was happening." Cliff Wagener added that he "can't see how it [the proposed development] can be done safely," arguing he thinks the area has the worst traffic in Lafayette.

David Bowie, counsel for the O'Brien Land Company, spoke next, making it clear his client opposes rezoning of the site as there are "no rational grounds for it."

Only once the EIR has been completed will the application be considered by the city's Planning Commission, as Council Members reminded speakers they were not discussing the application that evening.

As if to clear the air, Council Member Don Tatzin commented, "We're getting too much into the definition of what 'is' is." And so, after 20 minutes of speakers and back and forth, Mayor Carol Federighi said simply, "We move on..."

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