

Sierra Club Lake Group

PO Box 415, Lower Lake, CA 95457

July 5, 2020

Supervisors Moke Simon, Bruno Sabatier, Eddie Crandell, Tina Scott and Rob Brown
255 N. Forbes Street
Lakeport, CA 95453

via email: publiccomment@lakecountyca.gov and guenocvalleycomments@lakecountyca.gov

RE: Guenoc Valley Mixed Use Planned Development Project; July 7, 2020 agenda item #6.3

Dear Supervisors:

The Sierra Club Lake Group welcomes this opportunity to participate in the discussion regarding this project yet again. We have previously submitted comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report which have been incorporated into the Final EIR and administrative record, and do not intend to restate them now. We have also previously stated that we support the project's many innovative and environmentally sensitive features, and appreciate the applicant's efforts to address issues raised by the Sierra Club and Redbud Audubon Society regarding wildlife connectivity.

However, actions over the past several weeks have left us with ongoing concerns about maintaining the integrity of the planning process.

On June 17, 2020 we submitted a letter to the Planning Commission pointing out a significant inconsistency with the Lake County General Plan that had not yet been addressed. A January 2011 amendment to the General Plan inserted language specifying that "the residential component of a Mixed Use Resort shall not allow more residential units than resort units during the course of construction and at build out." (Section LU-6.12.1). At all stages of development the Guenoc Valley Project would violate this provision.

It seems quite strange that this massive project -- possibly the largest ever to be proposed in Lake County -- should have approached the final stages of its complex approvals without either the developers or planning staff being aware of this potential conflict with basic policy. The obvious rectification would be to reduce the number of residential entitlements to those authorized by the General Plan, a solution that would have equally obvious negative impacts on profitability and is therefore presumably unacceptable to the developers.

In any case the Community Development Department proposed a different remedy, which is to insert a General Plan Amendment 6.12.3, stating that "the provisions of LU-6.12.1 and 6.12.2 shall not apply to the Special Study Areas of the Middletown Area Plan." Although we do not

fully support the reasoning behind this action neither do we deny that it is within the purview of the Board of Supervisors to take it.

However, this 11th hour amendment process introduces a deficiency into the project description as analyzed in the Environmental Impact Report, since CEQA requires that all required approvals be listed and evaluated. Properly speaking, after the conflict came to light the EIR should have been modified to address the potential impacts of relaxing residential development standards in this way, not only at the Guenoc Valley site but also elsewhere in the Middletown planning area, and then recirculated for public review. At the very least, due respect for process integrity requires that the Final EIR be amended to declare (should the declaration be warranted) that since all foreseeable impacts were already evaluated, the EIR does not need to be updated to address the consequences of General Plan Amendment LU-6.12.3.

Sincerely,



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