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Solano Avenue extension draws fire

Neighbors oppose west side connector across Napa Creek

By KEVIN COURTNEY
Register Staff Writer

After talking for decades about extending Solano Avenue south to First Street, the city will now decide if that plan should be scrapped in face of neighborhood opposition.

Residents between West F Street and Napa Creek turned out in force Tuesday to oppose a direct extension of Solano through their quiet neighborhood.

The city has no plans to build this north-south connection anytime soon, but the possibility has been hanging for years like the "sword of Damocles" over homeowners, Councilwoman Juliana Inman said.

The need to fix the route for this connector street arose when Rossi Development submitted tentative plans last year for a townhome project on First Street, sandwiched between First Baptist Church and the Church of Christ.

The city needs to know where a future connector will go before approving any development plan, city officials said.

The best route, according to staff, is a direct extension of Solano south of West F. Other options include extending Coffield Lane, which runs parallel to the freeway, over the creek.

After listening to a parade of residents south of West F denounce the connector as a neighborhood killer, the council said the city needed to decide the future of this street now.

The need for a connector was referred back to the city's Traffic Advisory Committee for evaluation. If the Solano extension doesn't make sense, the route should be removed from the city's general plan, council members said.

In the meantime, Rossi can proceed with its development application. If the Rossi plan allows for the direct extension of Solano to First, it will be considered, City Manager Mike Parness said.

Rossi's preliminary plan accommodates the future construction of a connector, which would meet First Street at the intersection with Freeway Drive, a company spokesman said. That intersection now allows cars to travel north of First only to the parking areas for the two churches.

The Traffic Advisory Committee won't just look at whether Solano should be extended. It will evaluate the need for additional crossings elsewhere in west Napa.

Napa Creek is a major barrier to circulation in west Napa. The first crossing west of the freeway is more than a mile away at West Pueblo, allowing motorists to take Pinewood

See SOLANO, Page A2



A number of Napa Valley interest groups oppose Billy Wilcoxson's request to have wine tasting at his property on Stanly Lane. Voters will decide the issue on Feb. 5 when they vote on Measure K. J.L. Sousa/Register

Mr. Pumpkin Patch wants your vote

Wilcoxson, with deep Napa roots, looks to expand south county marketplace



Billy Wilcoxson known as "Mr. Pumpkin Patch". J.L. Sousa/Register

By KEVIN COURTNEY
Register Staff Writer

Billy Wilcoxson has an entrepreneurial spirit that won't quit. It's earned him a spot on the county ballot for the second time in 12 years.

Wilcoxson is known to thousands of Napers as Mr. Pumpkin Patch. He

sold three quarters of a million pounds of pumpkins last fall at his holiday operation on Stanly Lane.

But Wilcoxson does more than sell pumpkins on Stanly Lane. He runs a Christmas tree lot, sells gourmet foods and antiques year-round, holds grape rootstock in cold storage, produces furnishings made from wine barrels, sells used bales of straw and rents space for a seasonal produce stand.

Leaving no part of his four acres fallow, Wilcoxson also grows 2,000 lavender plants, 300 olive trees, 200 grapevines and 200 rose bushes. Two years ago he built his house there, planting his front yard in corn and sunflowers. The view out his kitchen window last summer was a lot like Kansas.

"I am a dreamer," said Wilcoxson, a stocky, plain-speaking man who is universally known as Billy. "I work hard, but I have a good life and I have a good family."

It took a countywide election in 1996 for Wilcoxson to be allowed to put a produce stand on Stanly Lane.

See BILLY, Page A3

Critics say no to Measure K

Farm Bureau, Sierra Club say Stanly Lane owner is violating permit

By DAVID RYAN
Register Staff Writer

Billy Wilcoxson's bid to sell prepared foods and host wine tasting at his Stanly Lane Marketplace is stirring up opposition from a bevy of powerful Napa Valley interest groups.

The Napa County Farm Bureau, the Sierra Club, two Napa County supervisors and other county leaders oppose his bid to expand the business on his four-acre property in the agricultural preserve.

Wilcoxson has placed Measure K on the June ballot, seeking the ability to expand his business. The marketplace is in the county's agricultural preserve, where a vote of the people is required for a zoning change.

"This is a case of asking for something, doing something more than was authorized, and then asking for more," according to an argument against Wilcoxson's Measure K initiative on the Feb. 5 ballot signed by the Sierra Club and the

See MEASURE K, Page A3

Back behind bars in Napa | Some jail inmates released by mistake return, but not all

By CARLOS VILLATORO
Register Staff Writer

A total of six Napa County jail inmates have turned themselves in after they were released by mistake earlier this week, with six more out of the 25 expected to come back by late Saturday, according to Napa County Department of Corrections officials.

The 25 inmates were released after jail officials miscalculated the reductions in their sentences due to credits for good behavior or other factors. "I used a formula to calculate the good time and work time days; However I used the probation department's formula instead of the department of corrections," Department of Corrections

Director Julie Hutchens said Friday.

Not all the inmates will be asked to return, as jail officials said they would not pursue those who had five days or less remaining on their sentences. The inmates were serving jail sentences for misdemeanor crimes, ranging from DUIs and other non-

violent offenses to two people who were in for domestic violence convictions. None had more than 44 days remaining on their sentences.

"All of these people had already served 84 percent of the time owed to the county," Hutchens told the Register. "Once again, I want to stress that our priority is to see those who were released

with more than five days to serve are returned to the jail. I understand what happened, and I can assure everyone it will not happen again."

Hutchens began serving as director of Napa County Department of Corrections on Sept. 3. In her previous post, she served as a jail director in Siskiyou County.

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South Africa's top cop on leave

South Africa's national police commissioner, who faces charges of corruption and trying to protect a convicted drug smuggler, has gone on extended leave.

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Suharto shows signs of recovery

Doctors struggling to prolong the life of former dictator Suharto said he was showing slight signs of improvement Saturday.

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Low 34°
Forecast
Mostly sunny.

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