



October 15, 2009

Ms. Valerie Olson, Chair
Goleta Valley Planning Advisory Committee
c/o Planning and Development Department
123 E. Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, California 93101

RE: San Marcos Foothills, GVPAC, Parks and Open Space

Dear Chair Olson:

I write on behalf of the San Marcos Foothills Coalition (“SMFC”), the group that spearheaded the effort to preserve the San Marcos Foothills and is working to promote sound management and stewardship of this important parcel of land. SMFC drafted a comprehensive stewardship plan in 2001 that is posted on our website at <http://sanmarcosfoothills.org>.

As you may know, the developer, Jeff Bermant, in 2007 donated 200 acres on the eastern side of the San Marcos Foothills parcel to the Trust for Public Lands (“TPL”). TPL then gave the land to Santa Barbara County who has directed its Parks Department to manage the land for passive recreational public use. As a condition of Mr. Bermant’s development, the County also received a 10 acre parcel for use as a park, where active recreational use is contemplated.

Prior to Mr. Bermant’s gift, the 200 acres was part of a larger 377 acre parcel that was zoned for 75 houses. The County approved 20 homes on the 177 acres, and thus under the zoning and General Plan designation, there are 55 residential units that are today associated with the 200 acre parcel.

Typically during a “conservation donation” of this type, a conservation easement or similar legal instrument would be imposed to extinguish the potential for future development of lands like this. Unfortunately, this did not occur, and the land is still zoned for houses. While the County today is managing these lands for public open space purposes, there are no assurances that this will be the case into the future. Thus we ask your assistance and support in three ways.

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First, we ask that the GVPAC support SMFC's upcoming request that a conservation easement or similar legal instrument be created to ensure permanent protection over the 200 acre parcel. A conservation easement is generally considered the best and most effective mechanism for protecting open space lands for the public in perpetuity. This will ensure that the County always manages the land as public open space for the benefit of the community.

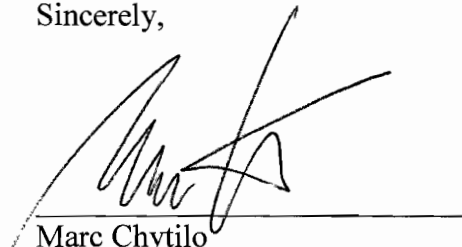
Second, we ask that the GVPAC recommend, as part of the Community Plan update, that the zoning designation of the San Marcos Foothills parcel be changed from the current PRD (Planned Residential Development) to a designation that ensures the natural resources and open space features of the lands will be afforded maximum protection. It appears that the zoning designation Recreational with an ESH-Gol Overlay is appropriate.

Finally, we ask that the GVPAC recommend, as part of the Community Plan update, that the General Plan be amended to designate the land as public open space for passive public recreation and habitat protection purposes.

We look forward to working with your Committee in developing protections that will ensure the continued protection for and public access across the San Marcos Foothills lands. Please contact me at 682-0585 if you have questions or need additional information.

Thank you for your consideration of our request in this regard.

Sincerely,



Marc Chytilo

For the San Marcos Foothills Coalition

CC: Supervisor Janet Wolf