



The Web Site of The Sacramento Bee

This story is taken from [El Dorado](#) at sacbee.com.

Cityhood critics open wallets

Opponents of El Dorado's Measure P outspend supporters by 2-to-1.

By Cathy Locke -- Bee Staff Writer

Published 2:15 am PST Thursday, November 3, 2005

Opponents have outspent incorporation proponents more than 2-to-1 in an effort to convince voters that a city of El Dorado Hills would not be fiscally viable.

They have put approximately \$133,000 into a campaign, including television ads, to defeat Measure P on Tuesday's ballot. The campaign zeroes in on voters' concerns that cityhood could result in higher fees or taxes.

The committee also changed its name from "Save El Dorado Hills" to "El Dorado Hills Citizens Against Fiscal Risk," said spokesman and former El Dorado County Supervisor Bob Dorr.

Cityhood advocates call it a misinformation campaign funded by developers and county officials who fear the effect incorporation would have on their interests.

Supporters of the incorporation measure have raised approximately \$55,000 and are relying on mailers, phone banks and door-to-door campaigning.

While developers, firefighters, chamber of commerce directors and county government officials have lined up against incorporation, the community services district board, neighborhood activists and youth sports leagues are backing the cityhood campaign.

The debate is largely one of costs vs. services.

* Developers, led by El Dorado Hills Business Park developer Sammy Cemo, fear building and development fees would increase with incorporation. "The numbers the incorporation group have presented don't add up," Cemo said, adding that the new city would have a severe cash-flow problem.

Citing his experience with other new cities, he said, "When they don't have money, they turn to developers or do without." Cemo has loaned \$30,000 to the "No on Measure P" campaign.

* The El Dorado Hills Chamber of Commerce board, after initially taking no position on incorporation, voted 6-3 to oppose it. Mike McDougall, project manager for several large residential developments in El Dorado Hills, said cityhood proponents failed to convince the board that incorporation would benefit business. "It was not crystal clear," he said.

McDougall said he was concerned about the business park's opposition to cityhood. He also cited as persuasive fellow board member and county Auditor-Controller Joe Harn's argument that the fiscal analysis for incorporation was flawed.

* Harn loaned \$2,500 from his election campaign to the "No on Measure P" campaign and presented similar arguments to the local fire board. He said he took exception to cityhood proponents' statements that a city would provide better services without new taxes. He predicted El Dorado Hills will suffer from the shifting housing market and decreased demand for upscale homes, resulting in less property tax revenue than projected in the financial analysis.

* The El Dorado Hills Fire Department board voted 4-1 to oppose incorporation. Although the

department would remain an independent special district, board members said they feared a cash-strapped city might seek to take over the district to boost revenue. The El Dorado Hills Associated Firefighters, the local firefighters union, took a similar position, citing concerns about a new city's fiscal viability.

Incorporation proponents defend the fiscal analysis and argue that a city of El Dorado Hills would not only survive but prosper. Harry Norris, a local business owner and incorporation proponent, noted that a consultant hired by the Chamber of Commerce to "analyze the analysis" also concluded that the city would be financially viable.

* The El Dorado Hills Community Services District board of directors has endorsed incorporation. Four of the five members are among the 19 candidates for the city council. The only non-candidate, board President Joe Chinn, finance director for the city of Elk Grove, has defended the fiscal analysis at community forums.

Board members say the district has been stymied in developing parks and other facilities in a timely manner due to a slow county approval process.

* The Bass Lake Action Committee, representing residents of new neighborhoods on El Dorado Hills' eastern edge, have endorsed cityhood. "We're unique in that we're (currently) affected by decisions by the Board of Supervisors," said Kathy Prevost, committee president. Neighborhood residents are particularly concerned about timely improvements to Bass Lake Road and argue that a city would provide better traffic control to curb speeding on residential streets.

* The El Dorado Hills Soccer Club and El Dorado Hills Little League boards of directors have endorsed Measure P, arguing that cityhood is critical to providing services for youths. They cite specifically the need for playing fields. "We're close to being built out as a community, and we don't have sufficient sports fields, said Marc Pearl, soccer club president.

With 1,500 youth soccer players, Pearl said, the club represents approximately 1,000 parents.

The county has failed to secure adequate parkland from developers, he said.

"They give a small little parcel of land, and that's difficult to use for fields," Pearl said. "The city won't allow that to happen."

Greg Jones, a spokesman for the cityhood campaign, said the support from youth sports groups is significant because they reflect community concerns that facilities and services aren't keeping pace with growth.

Some see the cityhood vote shaping up along demographic lines. Incorporation proponent Norris said he has found that most who oppose cityhood are 65 or older and have lived in the community 25 years or more.

Cityhood supporters, he said, often are "young families who want better parks and recreation, better traffic control and better law enforcement."

Proponents and opponents agree on one thing: They predict Tuesday's vote will be a close one.

About the writer:

- The Bee's Cathy Locke can be reached at (916) 608-7451 or clocke@sacbee.com.

Go to: [Sacbee](#) / [Back to story](#)

This article is protected by copyright and should not be printed or distributed for anything except personal use.
The Sacramento Bee, 2100 Q St., P.O. Box 15779, Sacramento, CA 95852
Phone: (916) 321-1000

[Copyright © The Sacramento Bee](#)