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El Dorado weighs sheriff's station

The county may build a facility in the Bass Lake area in the west end.

By Cathy Locke -- Bee Staff Writer

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Citing the need to boost law enforcement in western El Dorado County's most populous communities, the Board of Supervisors agreed to consider a public safety impact fee to fund construction of a sheriff's substation, possibly in the Bass Lake area.

The board Tuesday approved an agreement with MuniFinancial to prepare a fee analysis as required under the state's Mitigation Fee Act. The analysis will cost \$16,000.

Auditor-controller Joe Harn and Sheriff Jeff Neves recommended the study, but before the county committed to spending \$16,000, Harn said he wanted to make sure the supervisors were "on board with seeing it all the way through."

The area that would be served by a proposed El Dorado Hills substation is 75 percent built out, he said, adding that the fee would be charged to new development in the remaining 25 percent.

"Does the county want to put another fee on new development?" Harn asked, citing current debate over traffic impact mitigation fees.

Construction of a 12,000-square-foot substation is expected to cost between \$4 million and \$5 million. The county would have to allocate at least \$3 million to pay for the share of the facility that would serve current residents, Harn said.

"This will not solve the sheriff's need for a new administration building," Harn said. "This would just be a better substation than the one they are renting."

Neves said a new substation on the county's west end is important from a service delivery standpoint. The department is looking for a location that would serve El Dorado Hills, Rescue, Cameron Park, Shingle Springs and Latrobe, he said.

The area is home to about 60,000 people now, Neves said, and the department's long-range service plan projects the population will increase to 80,000 within 30 years.

"To handle it out of a single administration facility out of Placerville is a huge detriment," he said.

Neves said the western communities are experiencing increases in the types of crimes, such as robbery, that typically accompany growth.

Board Chairman Jack Sweeney voted to support the consultant's analysis, but he said, "I have a tough time with this fee."

The county needs some type of facility on the western end, he said, but "the only problem is where."

Defining specific areas that would benefit from a sheriff's substation is more difficult than identifying areas that benefit from road improvements, Sweeney said.

Harn said he had met with representatives of Parker Development Co. and AKT Development Co.,

the two major residential developers in the El Dorado Hills area, as well as representatives of the Building Industry Association. Based on the discussions, Harn recommended considering a building permit fee to support construction of a substation.

Mike McDougall, a spokesman for MJM Properties and AKT Development, said in an interview that it is appropriate for new development to pay its share of the costs for such facilities.

"I think it's a great idea to have a dedicated sheriff's substation in El Dorado Hills," he said.

When the Carson Creek development agreement was approved in 1996, it included a site dedicated for that purpose, McDougall said, adding that he would be happy to see a substation built there or elsewhere in the community.

Civic buildings are as important as houses, he said, noting that his company also helped fund the new El Dorado Hills Library. "Buildings like that are the foundation and heart of a community," McDougall said.

Supervisor Helen Baumann said a substation is needed, and the possibility of building it at the site of a Bass Lake fire station has been discussed.

With the extension of Serrano Parkway and realignment of Bass Lake Road, Neves said, the Bass Lake area would be a desirable location.

Baumann said the board has consistently put public health and safety at the top of its priority list. "It seems like \$3 million to \$4 million is really a very small price for the population that would serve," she said.

NEXT MEETING

What: El Dorado County Board of Supervisors

When: 9 a.m. Tuesday

Where: Board of Supervisors meeting room, 330 Fair Lane, Building A, Placerville

Web site: co.el-dorado.ca.us/bos/agenda.html

Phone: Board clerk's office, (530) 621-5390

Coverage: Western El Dorado County residents may view meetings on Comcast Channel 2 at 4 p.m. Wednesdays.

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