



MERIT  
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**Star Ranch Project has problems  
including denial by Planning Group  
PG Agenda  
John Ray Reports on Plans for  
Campo**

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## MERIT

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Newsletter #53

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### MERIT - MISSION STATEMENT

“The primary objectives and purposes of MERIT shall be to provide education and information that will  
1) protect and maintain the natural resources, 2) promote responsible use of ground water, and 3)  
preserve the rural character of the community.”

### Planning Group Considers Star Ranch Project and Votes to Deny

Bev Esry, Chairman of the Planning Group sent a message after the meeting.

*There seems to be a misunderstanding regarding the motion passed by the Planning Group Monday night on Star Ranch, so I am sending you all a copy of the letter (see below) I sent to DPLU with our denial. I want to especially thank Larry Johnson for doing such a great write up on it, as you can see I used his paper almost word for word.*

*For those of you who seem to think we, the members of the PG, don't listen to what people want and that we just do not want development out here, please pay close attention to the last paragraph. I believe we represent the majority of those who live out here, we will support development, but not mass development. I have had people in the community come up to me since our vote and tell me they agree, this project, along with A Children's Village, is just too big for our small community and would open the gate to more development and the end to Campo as we now know it.*

*Remember, Alpine started out one development at a time, and now look at it - and they have water. I think people should think long and hard before committing us to another Tavern Road. At any rate, we have an election coming in November, and that will certainly determine how our community will develop. Perhaps the pro-development candidates will win, and then we can all look forward to Alpine East.*

The Planning Groups's letter of denial sent to DPLU states

Dear Mr. Stocks:                      Reference: Star Ranch Project – TM5459

The Campo/Lake Morena Planning Group voted to deny the Star Ranch Project (TM5459) by a vote of 5-1-3 at their July 10, 2006 meeting. The conditions for denial are as follows:

- The density of the project is too high and the lot sizes are too small. The amount of units should be cut in half. It is in conflict with both our Community Character Statement and our Cameron Corner's Town Center Plan for GP2020. Both of these documents were written with full knowledge of the Star Ranch proposed project and, therefore, should apply. This project, at its present density, would bring us over our GP2020 build out population target. Less density will have positive impacts on traffic and light pollution while making it more compatible with our Community Character, rural environment and the new GP2020 plan.
- The project's commercial acreage exceeds the Cameron Corner's Town Center Plan. The size and extent should be compatible to that plan developed by our community and approved by county. A concentrated effort should be made to work with the other commercial property owners in that area to make changes that will benefit all.
- The wetlands immediately north of Highway 94 between the old grammar school and Cameron Corners should be a part of the pasture and should not be encroached upon.

- No houses should be placed south of Highway 94. The hill, trees and curve should be a part of the southeast pasture and remain a part of the cattle operation. Access by car and on foot from that area is severely hampered by Highway 94.
- The RV park should be well shielded from view from Highway 94 and should contain no more than 30 spaces.
- Artificial recharge is good, but the quality of the water being returned should be better than the local water in the ground, not reduced standards.
- Wells should be widely separated over the property so as to distribute the impact to the overall area. The pros and cons of wells in fractured rock vs. alluvium needs to be studied.
- We support a comprehensive groundwater study, but think it should include on and off site impacts as well as the latest concepts in groundwater sustainability
- .

Although we have recommended a denial of this project in its present form, we do believe it is basically a good project, with the exceptions noted above, and could, if revised, benefit our community. This project could have a large effect on the character of this community for many years to come, and realizing it could be worthwhile to deal with a single owner on a large project such as this, we look forward to working with them in the future.

Sincerely, CAMPO/LAKE MORENA PLANNING GROUP

CC: Supervisor Dianne Jacob Gary L. Pryor, Director DPLU

**Star Ranch Project May be Denied by DPLU**

Late in March prior to the Planning Group denial of the project, Star Ranch met with Gary Pryor, DPLU Director, and John Snyder, DPW Director. The meeting addressed the issues that would result in a denial of the project by the County. The information below is verbatim from the report Doug Paul of Star Ranch prepared on the project. MERIT has comments on this report at the end of the report

***Star Ranch Specific Plan Meeting Summary 3-27-06***

*The following is a summary of the items that were discussed and our (Star) understanding of what actions are to occur as a result of these discussions.*

*1. Two-acre Minimum Lots*

***The Village Area of Star Ranch proposes a variety of lot sizes ranging from 8,000 square feet to one-acre in size - all below the RDA two-acre minimum lot requirement.***

*The over all planning concept for Star Ranch is to create a rural conservation development that maximizes the preservation of open space and views, preserves the working cattle ranch with its agricultural land uses, and located the residences on the marginal non-grazing ranch-uplands, within walking distance of the Village Center, elementary school and new library. The two-acre lot minimum is an impediment to achieving a rural conservation design and prevents the ability to achieve the numerous community enhancements contemplated in the proposed specific plan. Rural conservation development concepts have been discussed for inclusion in GP 2020, although no draft language has been prepared. To permit lots less than two-acres in size (prior to GP 2020), Star Ranch proposes expanding the Cameron Corners Country Town boundary to include our entire village area. This extension does not affect Draft GP 2020 land uses for the Cameron Corners Village Area located outside the Star Ranch property. Within Star Ranch property the land use would be as proposed in the*

*previously submitted draft Star Ranch Specific Plan.*

*We concluded the meeting with the impression that this issue could be address in a variety of ways, with staff's help, but only after the Board of Supervisors considers the conceptual proposal to extend the sewer service area and upgrade the Rancho del Campo Sewage Treatment Plant (See Item 2 below).*

## *2. Consistency with Board Policy I-78*

***Our (Star) original application contemplated the construction and operation of an on-site wastewater facility. This is not consistent with County Board Policy I-78.***

*The (DPLU) Assessment letter comments were based on the Specific Plan as submitted, which proposed an on-site sewage treatment plant. In recognition of community input, as well as the County's concerns about potential proliferation of treatment facilities, Star Ranch now proposes that the existing Rancho del Campo Facility be upgraded and modified to provide additional treatment capacity to meet current country-town or future 2020 rural village discharge demands. The upgraded facilities would then be able to serve all existing customers, and currently anticipated future customers including Star Ranch Village homes. The upgraded plant will provide a significantly higher level of treatment, which will allow for the return and reuse of reclaimed water back into the upstream groundwater basin. It will also provide a broader rate base to support improved treatment system reliability. Because Star Ranch no long proposes an on-site sewage treatment facility, there is no inconsistency with I-78. It would not apply to this project. However, connection to an upgraded Rancho del Campo Treatment Plant would require expansion of the recently established Campo Water and Sewer Service Area Boundary or future annexation to the proposed Campo Sewer Maintenance District. Expansion options will require review of Board Policy I-135 to determine compliance.*

*County staff determined that in order for DPLU to continue processing the Star Ranch submittal, the Board of Supervisors must first conceptually approve a proposal to extend the Sewer Service area to include the Village Center of Star Ranch. Any proposal to upgrade the existing sewage treatment facility should be accompanied by a concept feasibility study, which provides a cost benefit analysis and fully documents the economic feasibility of operating the plant. DPW staff will develop the required elements of the concept feasibility study.*

## *3. County Groundwater Ordinance Requires a "Public" Water Agency*

***The question of jurisdictional status (public vs. private) of the water agency to serve Star Ranch was raised.***

*County staff agreed that the ordinance does allow "Private" water agencies, although staff is concerned that suitable safeguards be in place to protect customer from unreasonably high costs for water service. Staff also wanted assurance that the county would be protected from having to deal with a failed private venture. The possibility of having a private entity established in a format that required PUC oversight was discussed. This issue along with the documentation of adequate groundwater supplies will be closely examined during the course of the project review and is likely to be a focus of attention for the Star Ranch applications before the Board of Supervisors.*

*Post Meeting Comments*

*At the meeting staff indicated that connections to the Campo Water and Sewer Service area from proposed development outside the Campo Water and Sewer Service area are prohibited by Board Policy I-135.*

*To fully resolve the sewer issue, we recommend that the proposal to expand the Campo Water and Service Area be accompanied by a proposed amendment to Board Policy I-135. An amendment to Board Policy I-135 will be justified by the expanded treatment capacity (which is not permitted under the policy) and numerous public benefits to be documented in a concept feasibility study to be prepared at Star Ranch's expense. The current Board policy is in place to address allocation of limited treatment capacity in the existing system.*

**MERIT** is very disappointed that most of this information was not presented to the Planning Group and the community when Star Ranch gave their presentation July 10<sup>th</sup> that focused on water and sewer. They had this information three (3) months before our July meeting. They were meeting with the County to try to change the County's position. What was Star trying to hide? What were they afraid of? Why not be up front with the community? What it appears to MERIT they are hiding is a plan to convert the area from Lake Morena all the way to Campo and Campo Hills including neighboring properties into one gigantic city.

To highlight just some of the comments:

***The Village Area of Star Ranch proposes a variety of lot sizes ranging from 8,000 square feet to one-acre in size - all below the RDA two-acre minimum lot requirement.***

***Our (Star) original application contemplated the construction and operation of an on-site wastewater facility. This is not consistent with County Board Policy I-78.***

*.....would require expansion of the recently established Campo Water and Sewer Service Area Boundary or future annexation to the proposed Campo Sewer Maintenance District.*

*.....extend the Sewer Service area to include the Village Center of Star Ranch.*

*.....serve all existing customers, and currently anticipated future customers including Star Ranch Village homes.*

We believe you can see what Star wants to do without our editorial comment. However, in future newsletter and meetings we will comment further on these matters.

**Lake Morena Village and Campo News and Views - Gone but not forgotten and returned again?**

John Long who published the Lake Morena and Campo News and Views is moving from the area. A number of people were interested in continuing the publication of the paper for reasons outlined below. MERIT believes that the residents of the community should know the agenda of those who communicate to the community and that hidden agendas like those of the Lake Morena News should be NOT be hidden. We all need to know the agenda people espouse.

MERIT makes it very clear what our agenda is. Our Mission Statement, which can be read at the top of every newsletter, could not be more clear. In public meetings we make it very clear where we stand and what we believe to be the best things for our area. We are beholden to no one.

Unfortunately the Lake Morena Village and Campo News did have a hidden obligation to generate community support for large scale growth in the community and especially to generate support for the Star Ranch project. John Long told two community members directly that Star Ranch was subsidizing the publication of his newspaper and without that subsidy he would not have been able to

continue publishing. You can do the math. John told us the cost of the newsletter was \$1,875 per issue. The six to seven pages of ads generated no more than \$1200 to \$1400 at the rates John charged. There was a shortfall of \$500 each month.

And what was the result of that subsidy? If you read the paper it was a series of history pieces on the ranch and how the development would be such a wonderful thing for the community. This series of public relations article was followed by a two page "interview" with Barry DeVorzon. To use Hollywood vernacular which we are sure Barry would understand that was a "puff piece".

MERIT has no problem with organizations and people having a point of view. We do and you know that. Our problem is a paper that hides their point of view and passes off editorial commentary as factual news. We hope you see these articles for what they were - an attempt to sell you something. Is their product something you need or want? Not likely.

We believe the paper will continue on in some form. We know that some people associated with big growth group are saying the Lake Morena Village News had to continue it could "counter" what MERIT puts out.

You be the judge. Does MERIT need to be stopped? What is bad about simply reporting what is going on and letting you make your own decision? Why is it necessary to use the News to sell the community on a land use project most of them do not want, have never wanted and appear unlikely to ever want. Why is there a mad scramble to take over the Lake Morena Village News? Money most likely but certainly not the money generated by profits from the newspaper. Money from massive scale development seems more likely.

MERIT hopes John's paper continues to publish. And we appreciate the effort of Jill Coryell, Interim Editor, to put out the current issue during a time of transition. Continuity is important. We read it and we think it makes an important contribution to our community and we look forward to what they have to report. However, we also recognize the paper's pro big growth bias to forever change Campo as we know it. We trust that you will also.

### **The Airport Vote is on the November Ballot - Vote NO**

Another issue that will be on the November ballot is the vote on the Airport. MERIT members attended most of the meetings in the last 18 months both here and in Alpine and also the Airport Authority Working Committee meetings in San Diego. While the Boulevard/Campo site is no longer a viable alternative for all of the same reasons we oppose massive growth projects, there is a choice to be made. We strongly recommend that you vote NO and vote against Miramar as the option San Diego should pursue. A NO vote is essentially a vote in favor of keeping what we have now which is Linbergh Field. There is no more convenient airport in the United States than Lindbergh. Easy to get in and out. A new airport will be paid for by travelers as each time you would use a new airport the fees would include money to pay for the multi billion dollar construction of a new airport. In future newsletters we will discuss some of the issues that make Miramar a bad choice for San Diego County residents and is a bad choice for visitors. There will be a lot of money spent on advertising to convince you Miramar is the answer to all your problems. Consider the arguments with great skepticism. Vote NO on Miramar.

### **A Benefit Fee for the Campo Volunteer Fire Department is on the November Ballot**

MERIT has invited community residents in the Campo Fire Area (CSA 112) for and against the fee to submit statements for and against the fee proposal. These will be in the September newsletter for your review. The fee increase proposes a \$75 per parcel (not per home) fee to support CSA 112.

### **New/Old Saint Vincent de Paul Project Proposed**

You may have heard rumors that Saint Vincent de Paul was moving ahead with a large camp on the original 400+ acre Tom Dyke Ranch they were gifted in 1998. The original MUP for this project was coupled with the original foster child home proposed for a location east of the Truck Museum north of 94. The MUP was withdrawn due to opposition.

Saint Vincent de Paul and their architects did meet with DPLU July 12<sup>th</sup> for a Pre Application meeting to discuss the project. MERIT will provide a more complete detailing of the plans in our next newsletter. However, the camp is being planned for a maximum of 350 people although some of the capacity would be tent sites. Eight bunkhouses accommodating 32 people each and counselors, six additional studio cottages, an indoor swimming pool in a 15,000 square foot building, an amphitheater and a 15,000 square foot camp center building are among the components being proposed.

SVDP is still early in the process and it would be a few months before a MUP is prepared since the project will very likely require an Environmental Impact Report. See next month for more details.

#### **A Children's Village (Saint Vincent de Paul) Update**

The applicant's comments on the response to the Environmental Impact Report were due 21 Jul 2006. Next newsletter will report on the response from SVDP and the status of the project.

#### **Harvest Glen Subdivision TM5366 Update**

The saga continues with a request from DPLU that the project be redesigned. On July 19<sup>th</sup> DPLU sent the applicant a letter. We quote a part of the letter in which DPLU advised the applicant "These issues(discussed in the DPLU letter) may require substantial redesign of the proposed project or, if not resolved, would result in a recommendation for project denial by DPLU.":

DPLU said on Groundwater "...the upland areas of the property should have lot sizes increased due to low specific capacity of wells in the upland area of the site. Both Wells 3 and 4 failed the pump testing requirements of the County Groundwater Ordinance, and Well 5 was not pump tested because the well driller estimated the capacity to be low. This area of the project will require larger parcel sizes or may potentially need to be eliminated from the project...."

DPLU said on Biology - Mitigation "The biology report does not propose adequate mitigation per CEQA." "The loss of chaparral, big sage brush scrub, coastal sage-chaparral scrub, and non-native grasslands is considered significant." (MERIT estimates this is about 130 acres of the 285 acre site.) There are problems with lot size and lot configuration. There are traffic problems. In fact there are a number of problems. The applicant is to submit their response by September 4, 2006. We will keep you informed.

DPLU is also attempting to figure out how the Chapter 11 bankruptcy for the developer USA Investment Partners (located in Las Vegas) will affect this application.

#### **Campo/Lake Morena Planning Group Meeting at Community Center Monday July 24, 2006**

New business items will be heard out of order at the start of the meeting

#### **V. CORRESPONDENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

1. Four seats (2,4,6,&8) on the Planning Group will be coming up for reelection in November. The filing period for anyone who wishes to run is July 17 thru August 11, 2006. Candidates must be a registered voter living in the Campo/Lake Morena Planning Group area. There is no fee to run, however, if anyone wants to submit a "candidate statement" the cost is \$110 for 200 words. Applicants must apply in person at the Registrar of Voters on Ruffin Road.
2. We have received a copy of a letter from MERIT to DPLU listing the failure of that department to monitor Campo Hills and sites several problems that they have failed to address. (See item d under Old Business)
3. General Plan 2020 is tentatively scheduled to appear before the Planning commission on Friday, July 28<sup>th</sup> to review changes to the Circulation Element and is then scheduled to go before the Board of Supervisors on Wednesday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>.
4. We have received notice from county that they are proposing to adopt a Negative Declaration for their County Noise Element Update. We have a copy of the draft Negative Declaration should anyone want to review it.
5. We have received documentation similar to the presentation by Tom Parry of TAC last month regarding speed limits and their legality. A copy is available should anyone want to review it.
6. The Railroad Museum reports that they have lost one of the two large oak trees that were on the Leach property purchased in 1981. Close inspection shows the trees to be distressed, looks like they cannot find the water they need as the valley's water table is down. No expert opinion if the wells from Campo Hills which are upstream is related to this. On another front, Dianne Jacob has found the \$40,000 needed to

- install real restrooms at the Campo Depot, but volunteers are needed. Please contact Brain Elmore if you are interested in volunteering. Volunteers will get first chance at the wood from the fallen oaks.
7. Supervisor Dianne Jacob will be holding a coffee for all interested residents of our community on September 29<sup>th</sup> at the Mtn. Empire Community Center from 8:30 to 10:30 am.
  8. Hearings at 9:00 am on the Circulation Element of GP2020 will be held by the Planning Commission on July 28<sup>th</sup> and the Board of Supervisors on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. The public is welcome to attend and comment.

#### **VI. COMMITTEES/LIAISON REPORTS:**

Camp Lockett Park - Jean Bates, County Trails – Shirley Driscoll, Wireless Communications – Bob Shea, Liaison Disaster Preparedness Meeting - Larry Johnson, Comprehensive Ground Water Study - (Co-chairs L. Johnson & J. Carmody), Transportation – Bob Shea, Liaison, Jacumba Crossing – Bob Shea Liaison

#### **VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

- I. Possible vote on the possibility of proposing future bicycle races going through Jacumba rather than Campo. Jacumba has expressed an interest in having the them there but so has our Business Association Group here in Campo. This item has been held over from our March 2006 meeting.
- II. Discussion regarding possible changes to Standing Rules. (Discussion and vote 30 min)
- III. Discussion regarding adopting standing rules for membership on sub-committees. (Discussion and vote – 30 min - note: This item may be held over until the August meeting)
- IV. Discussion and possible vote on sending a letter to Dianne Jacob and DPLU requesting their assistance in getting answers to some of the decisions made regarding Campo Hills as well as DPLU's failure to follow this development through – is this something that reflects their handling of future projects in our area? (15 min) (See Correspondence & Announcements – item b)
- V. Discussion on the possibility of Star Ranch requesting changes from the Board of Supervisors to Policy I-78 and I-135 and the position this Board wants to take regarding this issue should it go before the BOS – (15 min)
- VI. County has notified Debra Gardner of Nextel Communications that DPLU will recommend denial of the Graves cellular project P04-061 should they go ahead without the proposed landscaping. This is the “shed” type structure that we approved with the condition of not using Pepper trees. County has recommended they substitute a fire resistant evergreen tree with similar coloring to the natural vegetation such as Toyon, Liquidamber or Rhus Lancea. They have also recommended substitutions for native shrub species which would be more fire resistant and they include Sage (except black sage) Ligustrum, Calif. Redbud, Monkeyflower, or Common Yarrow.
- VII. Graves Cellular tower – still awaiting word from Tom Graves and DPLU, but we have received a copy of a notice sent to applicant stating that DPLU will not accept a non-camouflaged structure and they will not support an extension of this project until a meeting with them takes place, nor will they accept any further submittals until the issue is resolved.

#### **IX. NEW BUSINESS**

- Brad Roberts of Department of Parks and Recreation will give a 30 minute presentation on What They are Doing and Where They are Going. This item along with item b below will be heard out of order following approval of minutes.
- John Ray will give a 15 minute presentation on his plans for his property here in Campo.

#### **Miller Creek Ranch Update**

While the owner told residents in the area this recently purchased parcel had been put back on the market for \$2.5 million with the intention of a flip for \$300,000, there has been a swarm of surveyors, archaeologists, biologists, botanists, etc on the property in the past few weeks. This is usually indicative of a development project but no one knows at this point. We will report when information is available.

#### **Legacy Ranch TM5371 Update**

There has been no activity on this project since early in November. Ed Gowens, DPLU Planner for the project, said the project has missed a number of deadlines and will be recommended for denial unless there is some action taken shortly. While there is no documentation submitted by the developer, there has been some verbal communication that the developer will withdraw the subdivision map and submit a minor subdivision. The original project was expanded from 8 homes to 9 homes and the site had a number of constraints including substantial open space and expansion of La Posta Road. The three lots west of La Posta had problems with driveway cuts onto La Posta.

A minor subdivision of four or fewer lots on the east side of La Posta in a Tentative Parcel Map would be much easier to process. DPLU does not know what the developer wants to do. When we hear, we will include the information in the newsletter.