

# Rolling Hills Estates holds first hearing on Chandler development project

**Melissa Pamer, Los Angeles Newspaper Group, 10-6-10**

In a packed meeting room, a Rolling Hills Estates commission this week held its first official hearing on a long-planned project to replace a massive rock quarry and neighboring country club with a new golf course and 114 luxury homes.

The Planning Commission made no decision on the project at a Tuesday evening meeting that brought out more than 100 city residents.

The panel is set to meet again Nov. 1 on the project, which is being pursued jointly by the Rolling Hills Country Club and Chandler's Palos Verdes Sand & Gravel facility.

City Planning Director David Wahba said he wanted to give commissioners time to "digest" comments made by critics and supporters of the project, known as Chandler Ranch.

Several meetings may be necessary before the commission makes a recommendation to the City Council, which has final say over the controversial 228-acre project off Palos Verdes Drive East.

Tuesday's two-hour meeting rehearsed a now-familiar set of disagreements over the impact of the proposal.

"It's going to create an attractive gateway into the city of Rolling Hills Estates. That should enhance property values," said country club board member Kevin Jennings.

"This project is a win win win. It's a win for Rolling Hills Estates. It's a win for Rolling Hills Country Club because we get to be in control of our own destiny. And it's a win for the Chandler family because they get to exchange one incoming-producing asset and exchange it for another one."

The project would join the steeply contoured quarry property - now a landfill for inert construction waste - with the country club's existing 18-hole golf course. Part of a newly configured course would replace the quarry, while homes would be built close together on a portion of the former golf course.

But the subdivision would be removed from the city's horse overlay zone, meaning residents could not keep the four-legged creatures that have defined the equestrian-friendly city. That and other factors has prompted criticism from some local equestrians, who would like to see changes in the project.

"It should take in to consideration what the residents want, not just what the developer wants," said Dale Allen, president of the Palos Verdes Peninsula Horsemen's Association.

Several speakers called for further investigation of Indian artifacts that have been found in the area, specifically asking for ground-penetrating radar to look beneath the site.

Jacob Gutierrez, a representative of the San Gabriel band of Mission Indians, contested claims from the project's backers that a thorough archaeological investigation had already been performed.

"By not doing the right thing, it's called erasure. You're erasing our history," Gutierrez said.

Others who live nearby said they support the project in part because they want to see the Chandler pit - an eyesore for many decades - covered.

Bob Bennett, a member of the private country club and a horse-owner, noted that many city residents do not keep horses.

"The issue is not that there's not enough capacity" for horses, Bennett said. "The issue is that there's not enough demand."

Commissioners said little to indicate their perceptions of the project.

They asked about the effect of keeping the project in the horse overlay zone and about the use of ground-penetrating radar. They also wanted more information about a water filtration system meant to prevent pollution down the hill in Machado Lake, as well as effects on traffic and a rare bird species.

Responses to those issues should be available at the Nov. 1 meeting.