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## BAREC Question Likely Headed to Voters

By Carolyn Schuk

Voters will likely get the chance to weigh in on the BAREC development plan approved by the Santa Clara City Council.

The Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters notified the Santa Clara City Clerk on July 25, that it had validated the signatures for both of the petitions submitted on July 18. The final signature count was 5,157 and 5,027 valid signatures on the Rezoning Referendum and General Plan Amendment Referendum Petitions respectively.

At the August 21 Council meeting, Council Members will have the choice of repealing the resolutions or calling an election. If an election is called, the soonest it can be held -- by the terms of the City Charter -- is February, 2008. A special election will cost \$172,049, according to the City Clerk's office.

On June 19, the Santa Clara City Council voted unanimously (with one abstention) to approving rezoning and the general plan amendment resolutions that pave the way for two separate developments on the former UC Agricultural station on Winchester Blvd.: 110 units of market rate housing and a one acre park by Summerhill Homes, and 162 units of low-income senior housing by the Methodist Retirement Foundation and Charities Housing.

"Based on the past five years of working within our community, we were confident that the citizens of the City of Santa Clara would support the referendum process to place these critical decisions on the ballot," said SaveBAREC spokesman David Ledesma in a July 26 press release.

For SaveBAREC, the organization spearheading the petition drive, this is a major victory.

"I can honestly say, not many people thought we could accomplish the goal of collecting the required signatures in just three weeks," said SaveBAREC spokesman Kirk Vartan at a July 27 press conference.

"I was even told by a Santa Clara elected official that he thought the referendum would 'crash and burn.' It was sheer determination by the members of this community, focusing on the task at hand, that made this happen, showing just how much they care about this unique piece of land."

However, proponents of the current plan are not dismayed by a referendum.

"We're happy that the voters will have an opportunity to vote on this issue," says Alice Sutton, Executive Officer of the Santa Clara Methodist Retirement Foundation. "We feel the voters will make a favorable



SaveBAREC spokesman Kirk Vartan comments on the organization's successful petition drive to rescind the current BAREC development plan or submit it to voters.



A woman with her son reading the Weekly while waiting for the press conference to begin.

choice.

The location is ideal for senior housing, continues Sutton. "Many seniors have to give up their cars. [At the Winchester Blvd. location] they're right next to Valley transit, stores. There just couldn't be a better location."

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