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FORUM: Building moratorium bad idea at wrong time

GENE WUNDERLICH -- Southwest Riverside County Association of Realtors | Posted: Thursday, October 22, 2009 12:00 am

In the Community Forum Oct. 15 in The Californian, Jack Hoagland, a Rancho California Water District director, wrote a piece titled "What part of 'water crisis' escapes understanding?" In his forum, Hoagland details his proposal for Rancho Water to "temporarily stop issuing water supply letters (necessary in the approval process for new development) and to stop installing water meters." Translation: Building moratorium.

I'm not sure if Hoagland actually believes the specious arguments he puts forward or if the whole scheme is his attempt to shock the community into a response. As he summarizes, "We need action from our development community to pressure the Legislature to resolve the state water issues."

Perhaps he believes his plan to hold the community hostage is what it will take. Perhaps he hasn't been aware of, or participated in, the numerous efforts by local businesses (including developers), municipalities and Rancho Water District customers to effect comprehensive change with the Legislature through numerous letter writing campaigns and personal visits.

Or perhaps he truly is that out of touch with the community he purports to serve. The "if we don't build it, they won't come" philosophy went out of favor during then-Gov. Jerry Brown's last term.

What we do not need is an attempt by Rancho Water or any other group to stifle legitimate development in this economic climate.

While Hoagland alludes to "vacant malls and commercial centers" and the high residential foreclosure rate, he doesn't seem to grasp that these have already had a severe dampening effect on development.

Yet with our residential housing market carrying an active inventory of just more than one month, the need for additional housing stock will become apparent before long. Similarly, with the lack of funding mechanisms currently available for commercial development, only well-conceived and funded projects are going forward; the rest are waiting until the current glut of available space is reduced.

If you agree that the last slap our community needs right now is a building moratorium, please join me at a public hearing at 6 p.m. Nov. 9 at the Rancho Water District board room at 42135 Winchester Ave., Temecula (Winchester west of Diaz).

Hoagland claims he would like to "hear our ideas and views." Let's make sure he does ---- politely and concisely.

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