

COUNCIL DECISION REQUEST

SUBJECT: East Verde Park Fire District Potential Annexation of Canyon River Ranch

MEETING DATE: September 20, 2007

PGP ITEM: New Existing

ITEM NO.:

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

SUBMITTED BY: Martin deMasi, Fire Chief

AMOUNT BUDGETED: 0

SUBMITTAL TO AGENDA

EXPENDITURE REQUIRED: 0

APPROVED BY TOWN MANAGER

CONT. FUNDING REQUIRED: 0

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EXHIBITS (If Applicable, To Be Attached): Agreement from ADEQ

RECOMMENDED MOTION

No recommended motion.

SUMMARY OF THE BASIS FOR RECOMMENDED MOTION:

The East Verde Park Fire District (EVPFD) has been considering whether or not to annex the Canyon River Ranch (CRR) property west of Payson into their fire district. They are doing this at the request of the CRR developers. CRR, as you may recall, is the old Doll Baby Ranch property. You may also recall that the developers of this property approached the Town last February seeking to contract for fire services and at that time the Town elected to not do so.

The CRR developers are pursuing this arrangement because Gila County has recently added fire protection to the list of requirements for approval of any new developments. The County has added this requirement because there are a number of areas, especially in northern Gila County, that do not have fire protection and the County feels this is a vital service that needs to be addressed.

Soon after the Council rejected the CRR developer's overtures, the developers approached me to ask what to do next. I advised them that, after a month or so, they should contact the Mayor and Council to see whether reconsideration was possible. Evidently, the developers chose to go another direction. They have retained former Payson Fire Chief Chuck Jacobs to assist them with their fires services problem.

The list of possible solutions to their problem:

- Form a private fire protection service.
- Form a new fire district that includes the CRR property.
- Annex into an existing fire district.
- Contract with an existing fire district for services.
- Give up on this development and sell the property.
- Approach the Town of Payson with some sort of incentive package that would gain approval of the Council.

There are pros and cons to each solution. A few are listed below.

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- Form a private fire protection service.
 - Pro: Solves the problem.
 - Con: Expensive and probably not realistic. May not be acceptable to the County as a long-term solution. There is a likelihood that the private fire company would cease as soon as the developers were done with the project and the HOA did not want to pay for it. Extra work for the developers.
- Form a new district:
 - Pro: Provides a long-term solution.
 - Con: Difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish. Gila County is not likely to approve the creation of another small fire district. The County has taken the stance that they are not in favor of more fire districts but rather that new developments be part of an existing district. The character of the community will be that it consists mainly of part-time residents resulting in difficulties in recruitment, training and staffing of firefighters for the district.
- Annex into an existing fire district:
 - Pro: Provides a long-term solution. The existing fire district either provides fire services directly or contracts with the Town of Payson for such services. State law allows fire districts to annex properties if certain procedures are followed.
 - Con: CRR has only two choices for annexation, either the EVPFD or the Round Valley/Oxbow Fire District. EVPFD is the closest, but not by far. Each of these districts contracts with the Town for services and the Town may not appreciate being forced into providing service when they have already expressed the desire not provide such services. Annexation under these conditions may jeopardize their current contracts and result in an unacceptable reduction of fire protection services for them.
- Contract with an existing fire district.
 - Pro: Solves the problem.
 - Con: There is only one fire district that has the potential wherewithal to pull this off. The Diamond Star Fire District could contract with CCR and expect the Payson Fire Department (PFD) to respond as part of the mutual aid response. This would result in the unfavorable position of the PFD responding to areas on a regular basis for no consideration. If the PFD refused to respond, the mutual aid system for the entire northern county may be placed in jeopardy. I would doubt that any fire district would intentionally jeopardize the system that we all depend on. May not be a long-term solution if the fire district decides to terminate the contract.
- Give up on the project and sell the property:
 - Pro: This becomes somebody else's problem.
 - Con: Potential loss of investment already made.
- Approach the Town with an incentive package that allows for additional human resources to be available for response into CCR.
 - Pro: Solves the problem.
 - Con: Expensive. Unknown if this is a legal alternative. May not be an acceptable solution if the future property owners (HOA or whoever) do not want to continue whatever arrangement is made.

I have advised the Board of Directors of the EVPFD to table their decision on annexation until the Town Council can review the situation and that based on recent Council action I do not see the Council supporting this annexation. At this time, the essential problem with any of these arrangements is that the Town is concerned that PFD may be stretching itself too far to provide acceptable fire protection for the Town while servicing the CCR.

A review of the last several years finds that we responded to the EVPFD an average of 9 times per year. The EVPFD has 243 lots with about 170 homes and 70 full-time residents. The CCR will have approximately 180 lots and is projected to have very few full-time residents. Using the experience of the EVPFD as a means to estimate the number of responses to the CCR shows that we could expect to respond to the CCR property approximately 6 to 8 times per year after the area achieves build out.

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PROS:

CONS:

PUBLIC INPUT (if any): N/A

BOARD/COMMITTEE/COMMISSION ACTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS (if any) (give dates and attach minutes): N/A