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## A rocky road to cityhood

**Communities are tackling fiscal issues in separate quests**

11:29 PM PDT on Tuesday, May 24, 2005

**By JESSICA ZISKO and LEEZEL TANGLAO / The Press-Enterprise**

It's a tale of two would-be cities, both vying for a chance to incorporate.

The communities, however, are writing different stories.

After a year delay, Wildomar is back on the path to cityhood, while its neighbor Menifee is still stuck at a roadblock.

Riverside County supervisors re-ignited Wildomar's quest Tuesday when they voted 4-0 to re-initiate the community's petition to incorporate. Supervisor Roy Wilson did not attend the meeting.

The vote overrides a decision last year by the county's Local Agency Formation Commission to reject the application on technical grounds. The agency oversees the incorporation of new cities.

Wildomar residents can now move ahead with fundraising to pay for necessary environmental and fiscal studies, said George Spiliotis, executive officer of the agency.

"This is the very first step for them," Spiliotis said by phone.

It's a different story for residents trying to form a city near Menifee, where incorporation efforts have been riddled with delays and setbacks.

A study in March showed that the proposed city of Menifee Valley -- which would include the areas of Sun City, Quail Valley and Menifee Lakes -- was short of the money needed to sustain itself as a city.

For now, the process has been stopped until payment is received for the rest of the study, Spiliotis said.

Spiliotis said \$21,640 is still owed to complete the final analysis. The Menifee Valley Chamber of Commerce has decided to hold off funding the rest of the study until incorporation is more probable.

"We're going to move forward when it's more feasible so we have a better chance of cityhood," Menifee Valley Chamber of Commerce chair elect Bob Duistermars said by phone.

### PROPOSED CITIES

**Wildomar** would be 23 square miles between Lake Elsinore and Murrieta.

**Menifee Valley** would be 42 square miles and include Sun City, Quail Valley and Menifee Lakes.

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Wildomar faces the same dilemma: A fiscal study in October said the community also was short of revenue to support itself.

However, a bill making its way through the state legislature could make incorporation more feasible for Wildomar.

The bill, introduced by Assemblyman John Laird, D-Santa Cruz, in February would restore a new city's share of vehicle-license fees. The money was taken away recently when a state law changed.

With its growing commercial base and population boom, Wildomar could become a city immediately if the money were restored, according to the study. Menifee Valley would still be short.

The board of supervisors' Tuesday vote is good news for Wildomar, said Bob Cashman, chairman of Wildomar Incorporation Now, a group of residents that support cityhood.

Last summer, LAFCO threw out 3,000 signatures that proponents had submitted in support of incorporation.

Though the signatures were needed to move the application forward, the agency said cityhood backers were first required to complete a preliminary fiscal analysis.

The supervisors' decision revives the application and allows residents to work toward cityhood without collecting the signatures again. By law, a public agency such as the county can pass a resolution to start the incorporation process.

"They've taken the bold step to deal with it," Cashman said by phone.

County Supervisor Bob Buster, whose district includes Wildomar, argued in a staff report that cityhood proponents did not conduct a preliminary fiscal study for good reason.

Buster said residents were rushed to gather signatures to fight off an attempt by the city of Murrieta to annex the southern part of Wildomar. Also, a fiscal study commissioned by the county during the annexation process provided nearly all of the information that the agency needs.

Wildomar proponents now must find up to \$100,000 to pay for the comprehensive fiscal analysis. About 10 percent has been raised so far and fundraisers are planned for every month this year, member Bridgette Moore said.

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Staff writer Kimberly Trone contributed to this report.

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