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### Wildomar cityhood effort gets boost from county

By: DAVE DOWNEY - Staff Writer

RIVERSIDE ---- The Wildomar cityhood movement received a big boost Tuesday. In danger of having to go back to square one and collect thousands of signatures to keep cityhood hopes alive, proponents can turn their attention instead to preparing fiscal and environmental studies.

That's because the Riverside County Board of Supervisors voted 4-0, at the urging of Supervisor Bob Buster, to sponsor Wildomar residents' application to carve a new city out of the unincorporated community sandwiched between Lake Elsinore and Murrieta along Interstate 15.

There are two ways to launch an application for cityhood: circulate a petition and gather signatures representing 25 percent of a community's registered voters, or get a public agency to sponsor it.

Wildomar city boosters circulated a petition last year and said they had obtained 3,000 signatures, which appeared to be enough to move forward. They needed the signatures of 2,718 of the community's 10,872 registered voters. However, in December, a regional body that decides cityhood and annexation matters rejected the petition because it was circulated before a preliminary fiscal analysis was conducted ---- something the Riverside County Local Agency Formation Commission requires.

To prevent cityhood proponents from having to go out and collect signatures all over again, Buster proposed that the county sponsor the application. Supervisors' decision to get behind his proposal does not mean the board approves of cityhood. The question of whether Wildomar should incorporate ultimately would rest in the hands of the

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community's residents.

Even so, proponents say an election is still at least two years away.

Supervisors heard arguments from both sides of the issue before agreeing to push the application forward.

Joseph McCabe of Wildomar said he did not believe the community will have an adequate tax base to support a city at any time in the next 10 years. And Steven Betz of Wildomar added that supporting a city would entail spending a chunk of cash to construct buildings to house a municipal government and to pay city employees' salaries.

"Who is going to pay for this?" Betz asked.

McCabe suggested that, at the least, any application should be put on hold until the Legislature decides whether to pass new state legislation that would restore funding for newly forming cities.

But Rick Estes, a cityhood backer, said there was no reason for a delay, saying the legislation could become law in two or three months. He said a delay is not in the best interests of thousands who signed petitions in neighborhoods, on street corners and at community markets last year.

Contact staff writer Dave Downey at (951) 676-4315, Ext. 2616, or [ddowney@californian.com](mailto:ddowney@californian.com).

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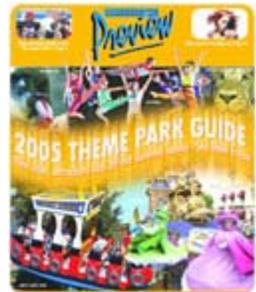
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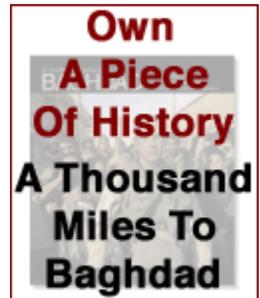
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