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Cityhood work on track in Wildomar

By: LAURA MITCHELL - Staff Writer

WILDOMAR ---- A group hoping to incorporate this community is nearly halfway to its goal of raising \$100,000 for cityhood.

Wildomar Incorporation Now raised \$11,000 during a casino night Saturday, giving it \$48,000 generated in the last several years, group Treasurer Bridgette Moore said Monday. The money is needed to pay for financial and environmental studies, application and filing fees, consultants and lobbyists.

The group is one of a number of communities seeking incorporation that have hired Sacramento firm Joe Gonsalves & Sons to lobby legislators on Assembly Bill 1602, which would restore vehicle-license tax revenues that new cities once relied on to pay for services during their early years. The vehicle-tax money that new cities received was eliminated from the state's budget beginning July 1, 2004.

A Senate hearing on AB 1602, written by Assemblyman John Laird, D-Santa Cruz, was put on hold in March to correct a technical error in the proposed legislation, Laird spokesman Bill Maxfield said. The bill is scheduled to be heard May 17, Maxfield said.

If Wildomar could get the vehicle tax money, it would not have a problem becoming an economically stable city, according to an October 2004 study by Temecula-based consultants MuniFinancial.

A larger and more recent study of Wildomar's economic viability is under way as part of the cityhood application process. The final application is set to be reviewed by the Local Agency Formation Commission, which will decide if Wildomar has the tax base to pay for city services such as police and fire protection, trash pickup and park maintenance.

Sheryl Ade, secretary of Wildomar Incorporation Now, said Monday the group is working to get all of the application documents turned in by the end of July or early August. If the commission approves the application, the county Board of Supervisors would need to approve

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holding an election in which voters in Wildomar would decide if they want the community to become a city.

Ade said her group is hoping to have an election in March 2007.

"But if we don't raise enough money, everything will come to a halt," she said.

If that happens, parts of the economic study would have to be redone because the county updates those numbers every year, Ade said. Redoing part of the study would be an additional cost, she said.

In addition, it takes about \$1,000 a month just to pay for the lobbyists, consultants, educational material and business expenses, Ade said.

So, the incorporation group continues to plan fundraisers ---- about one every month. The money raised during Saturday's casino night could pale in comparison to the next fundraiser the group is planning with county Supervisor Bob Buster.

Buster, whose district includes Wildomar, said Monday that he sent about several hundred invitations to local business people for the \$1,000-per-person fundraiser dinner scheduled at Bear Creek Country Club on May 17.

Buster said he wanted to help the Wildomar group volunteers out, recognizing how difficult it is in a grass-roots effort to raise money.

"It's not my job to tell people how to vote, but I think they deserve a chance to have the opportunity to vote on Wildomar's destiny," Buster said.

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