

DoubleTree project sparks interest in local elections

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A state elevator inspector, the owner of a home-based business that provides technical support to nonprofits and a real estate agent are among the most recent additions to the Rancho Penasquitos Planning Board.

The three new members were voted in on Wednesday, March 7. They will officially take their seats at the Planning Board's April meeting after the votes are ratified.

Also keeping their seats for another two-year term are incumbents Charles Sellers, Bill Diehl and Jon Becker, who ran unopposed.

More than 100 people voted, according to Dennis Spurr, the board's election chairman. Most of the votes were cast in District One, where Daniel L. Barker, the elevator inspector, won by a wide margin, Spurr said.

"It's great to see the public involved in these local elections," Spurr said.

The large turnout for District One, where the possibility of a major redevelopment project has been raised, was not surprising. Three candidates vied for the seat. The incumbent, Dan Lee, did not run for re-election.

Barker, who has lived in Rancho Penasquitos for eight years, said he ran because he wants to make sure the voice of his neighbors would be heard during upcoming discussions of important projects.

In particular, he referred to the possible redevelopment of the DoubleTree Golf Resort and the Cresta Bella apartments. Barker said although the latter project, near the intersection of Cuca Street and Carmel Mountain Road, is in District Two, it will have impacts for his district as well.

Representatives from the resort may make a presentation at the next Planning Board meeting.

Barker said he has major concerns the projects will bring high density and impact the community.

"We want to make sure that when we have development, it happens in a responsible way that doesn't damage the way people have come to expect to live in Rancho Penasquitos," Barker said.

Both Barker and Jeanine Politte, who was elected to a home business seat and lives in District One, are founding members of the PQ-NE Action Group, an organization that opposes density increases in the northeast area of Penasquitos also called "The Glens."

Politte said the additional units would bring extra cars and people to the area, impacting schools, streets and other services.

"For them to move forward with their proposal, the infrastructure has to be improved," she said. "If it isn't, I'm going to vote it down."

However Politte, who manages several Web sites — including the PQ-NE Action Group's www.savepq.org — added that her interests are larger than the aforementioned project.

"They are not going to be the only projects," she said.

“Because of the age of the community, we’re going to see a lot more redevelopment coming before the board, as long as the city doesn’t take those decisions out of our hands.”

In District Three, Sudha Garudadri ran unopposed, after incumbent Kelly Lemker decided not to run. Garudadri, who is trained as a dietician but works as a Realtor, said she is looking forward to sitting on the board and reviewing projects.

“I really like the idea that I will be able to represent the ideas of District Three,” she said.

Planning Board Chairman Joost Bende said he was satisfied with the election’s turnout, and noted that the interest over the possible redevelopment proposals made for good participation.

“I’m very satisfied with the results and the turn out,” Bende said.

“We had over 100 people vote in the election, which I think is the most ever for Rancho Penasquitos.” There were no candidates for District Seven, the town center area, and the seat remains empty.

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