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Arden Arcade cityhood foes get organized

Meanwhile, backers miss 2nd deadline, set sights on the June 2009 election.

By Ramon Coronado - Bee Staff Writer

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As a second-chance deadline to get Arden Arcade cityhood on the November 2008 ballot has come and gone, opponents of the lingering effort are picking up steam.

"We are not counting on them being dead in the water," said Mike Duveneck, of Stay Sacramento, which opposes incorporating the Arden Arcade area.

Joel Archer, who is leading the charge for cityhood, said while the 2008 election would have been nice, the real goal now is the June 2009 election.

"We are continuing to push forward to educate the community that local cities are thriving at a time when the county continues to lose money," Archer said.

Opponents of incorporation, who argue that cityhood would create an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy and new taxes, and would duplicate services already in place, held what they called their first organizational meeting last week.

About 50 people attended the hors d'oeuvres and wine social at Duveneck's home, including former Sacramento Sheriff Lou Blanas, who was introduced as the "honorary host."

"It was an opportunity for businesses and residents to find out who we are and what we are doing," Duveneck said.

A variety of business people, longtime area residents, Realtors and a Sacramento Superior Court judge attended the event and gave donations ranging from \$25 to more than \$500, Duveneck said.

The event raised more than \$4,000, he said.

"The next shoe to drop is to see if they can come up with money. We are not going to stop," Duveneck said.

As support appears to be growing for the opponents of cityhood, Archer and others who want to turn 13 square miles of unincorporated area into a city are struggling.

In late June, a lobbyist and fundraiser for cityhood abruptly and bitterly resigned from the group, citing a lack of leadership and lackluster citizen support.

A week later, proponents missed a key payment that was due to the Local Agency Formation Commission to study the proposal's viability.

The group missed the July 2 deadline to pay LAFCO \$33,000, although they made a "good faith" payment of \$17,000 the next day.

On July 10, the group missed an extended deadline to pay the \$16,425 balance, prompting LAFCO officials to notify cityhood supporters they can't complete environmental and financial viability reports in time.

"Based on nonpayment, LAFCO is no longer able to complete the EIR and CFA in time to make your requested November 2008 election," the agency's director, Peter Brundage, said in a letter to the proponents.

The payment is the first of several installments needed to help fund LAFCO studies. The group's total share is expected to be about \$200,000. LAFCO is expected to come up with \$100,000.

Archer said he will continue to push LAFCO for the studies and that money will materialize as the community learns more about the benefits of cityhood.

The area includes Fulton Avenue's auto dealer row, which generates millions of dollars in sales tax revenues.

On Thursday, when opponents of cityhood munched on cheese kabobs and sipped burgundy, the governing board of the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District was hearing a presentation on another scenario for the future of the 84,000 people who live in Arden Arcade.

If the city of Sacramento annexes the area, fire services would go to the Sacramento Fire Department and the Metro Fire District would lose \$20 million to \$27 million in revenue -- 17 percent of its budget, board member Gregory Granados said.

Cityhood would be one way to protect the district's six fire stations and 89 firefighters and staff who now work in the area, Granados said.

Although Granados said he was supportive of cityhood, the nine-member board has not taken a position on cityhood, said Jeff Lynch, district spokesman.

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