

San Diego Union-Tribune, The (CA)

September 3, 1988

Plans for huge church set back

Author: Barbara Moran; Staff Writer

SECTION: LOCAL

Page: B-1

Plans by a Lemon Grove congregation to build the biggest church in the county suffered a setback yesterday when the county Planning Commission declined to endorse further processing of an application for a general-plan amendment.

The request to process the amendment was made by the Skyline Wesleyan Church as a "housekeeping measure" to get all the affected property placed under the Rancho San Diego planning area. It would have initiated a process needed to rezone property for the church's desired use.

Instead, the commission unanimously upheld a recent 11-3 vote by the Valle de Oro planning group, which currently oversees much of the affected property, not to endorse application processing.

The proponents now have 10 days to file an appeal with the Board of Supervisors, which proponents said they would do.

The \$30 million church, proposed for a hillside at Campo Road and Jamacha Boulevard, would serve about 5,000 parishioners, church officials said. The massive structure would be visible for miles and include recreational facilities, an educational center and housing for senior citizens.

The commission agreed with the area's planning group that the church's request did not sufficiently meet county criteria used to judge whether amendments to a community's general plan should be allowed. The 10 requirements assess available public services, environmental impacts, impacts to community character and other issues.

Questions remain about where proposed Highway 54 will run across the property and about whether the Otay Municipal Water District intends to allow the church to utilize a portion of its property for a parking lot.

Concerns were also raised about impacts on wildlife in the vicinity. "If you approve this, you are saying it is OK to put urban development on land that was fully intended and always planned for open space," said Valle de Oro planning group member Jack Phillips.

Phillips said after the hearing that the planning group will seek a county investigation into grading done at the site by the Otay Water District. The grading appears to correspond with the proposed parking lot of the church, yet district officials have insisted no agreement about the land's use by the church has ever been reached. The planning group has not been able to locate an environmental impact report for the "extensive grading," Phillips said.

The water district is currently constructing water tanks in the vicinity of the graded site, but Phillips said the environmental impact report done for that project does not detail any grading or dirt storage on the site in question.

Graves said the church has been working with the district's general manager and staff for a couple of years on the parking-lot issue, although the water-district board has never taken any position on it. He denied that the grading being done by Otay was for the church's parking lot, although he acknowledged that the grading site fit the proposed location of the parking lot like "two pieces of a puzzle."

Copyright 1988 Union-Tribune Publishing Co.