



News

Town Council may rethink annexation

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YUCCA MESA — You've seen them: The bright red "stop" signs exhorting the Town of Yucca Valley to end its efforts at expanding its sphere of influence to include the unincorporated area of Yucca Mesa. Well, Yucca Valley Mayor Pro Tem Chad Mayes has seen them, too, and they got him to thinking.

"If the folks of Yucca Mesa don't want to be a part of the Town's sphere of influence, even though it's something that would benefit them, why would we continue this process?" he asked.

Mayes said he met with Yucca Mesa resident Jim Sammons last week to discuss the mood of the mesa.



Yucca Mesa Improvement Association president Ed Cronin, left, welcomes Jim Harvey, president of the Homestead Valley Community Council, to the YMIA's Friday meeting.

Sammons addressed the Town Council about the sphere of influence a year ago and was critical of what he called the Town's "secretive" methods in pursuing the process.

Sammons told Mayes over 1,000 signatures had been collected in opposition to the sphere of annexation application that the Town submitted to the San Bernardino County Local Agency Formation Commission.

The fear of some residents on the mesa is that the sphere of influence is the first step toward being fully annexed by Yucca Valley. That annexation, they argue, would bring zoning changes and destroy the more rural lifestyle enjoyed beyond the town limits.

Mayes said his thoughts about taking a second look at the LAFCO application submission became stronger during his lunch with Sammons.

"There's a better way to do this. We should have gone to them from the beginning," said Mayes.

He is doubtful, "with all the negativity now," that anyone on the mesa would listen to the Town's reasoning for the sphere of influence annexation, but he is willing to request that the council revisit the LAFCO application as a future agenda item at the Aug. 4 council meeting.

In the meantime, Sammons is exploring other means to accomplish the mesa's ends. Currently, Yucca Valley-based Hi-Desert Water District serves most of the mesa. If Yucca Valley expanded its sphere of influence, those boundaries would shadow the boundaries of the Hi-Desert Water District. Water infrastructure in the mesa belongs primarily to Hi-Desert.

Sammons approached the two neighboring water companies, Joshua Basin Water District to the east and Bighorn-Desert View Water Agency to the north, to see if the mesa could reassign its water provider, and to see if either of them would be interested in the job.

"Joshua Basin's highest tier is 50 cents less than the lowest tier in Hi-Desert," Sammons told his fellow members of the Yucca Mesa Improvement Association at their Friday night meeting.

Joshua Basin's general manager, Joe Guzzetta, said it would be an issue for LAFCO to consider.

"Sammons believes the mesa used to be in the Joshua Tree community," Guzzetta noted.

Sammons also inquired of Bighorn-Desert View. "They could certainly use some more meters in their district," he told the Yucca Mesa Improvement Association attendees.

"The board is always willing to listen," said Marina West, general manager of Bighorn-Desert View. "But I am still unclear if part of the mesa was once part of a predecessor district of Bighorn-Desert View."

Mike McGrath, treasurer of the Yucca Mesa Improvement Association, says the idea of "de-annexing" from Hi-Desert Water District would be moot if the Town agrees to pull its sphere of influence application from LAFCO.

According to staff at LAFCO, the Yucca Valley application is not yet scheduled for a hearing.

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