

## Fuentes shelves land-use bill

Measure would have let developer build more on golf course

By Kerry Cavanaugh

Assemblyman Felipe Fuentes pulled controversial proposed land-use legislation Monday amid criticism from fellow elected officials and constituents for introducing the bill at the request of a developer who would benefit from it.

Fuentes pulled AB 212 off the June 18 committee agenda and said he will let the bill die before its first hearing.

"We're going to take a real good look into this process and see if there is a need for state legislation," Fuentes said.

His decision comes several weeks after the Los Angeles City Council voted to oppose the bill, which would have limited L.A. leaders' ability to control land-use decisions.

Fuentes has come under fire because the bill was sponsored by MWH Development, a Woodland Hills-based company that has sought to build 229 single-family homes on the Verdugo Hills Golf Course in Tujunga.

Last year, in response to community concern about the project, Councilwoman Wendy Greuel proposed rezoning the land so MWH could only build about 12 homes.

Fuentes' legislation would have required the City Council to consider a residential development based on the density allowed at the time a project application was filed - even if the zoning is later changed.

Fuentes' office said the bill was broadly aimed at ensuring that rules aren't changed in mid-game for developers.

Still, the legislation troubled planners, city leaders and community activists following the Verdugo Hills golf course project.

MWH has contributed to Fuentes' campaigns and employs Mark Dierking, who worked with Fuentes in former City Councilman Alex Padilla's office.

Fuentes denied that the bill was tailored to the MWH development.

"It's not about this particular project. It's about the city of Los Angeles," Fuentes said.

Indeed, the state legislation did not mention the MWH project and would have only applied to the city of Los Angeles.

"To avoid criticism, we decided not to apply it broadly because Los Angeles is very different than Northern California. We wanted to make sure the process is working in the city of Los Angeles and then figure out how to back into the rest of the state," Fuentes said.

But, he added, the controversy and criticism around the bill has hindered any opportunity for negotiations and vetting, so he will drop it for now.

Fuentes did not appear to have support from neighboring districts. Assemblyman Cameron Smyth, whose district includes the golf course, said he supports Greuel's effort to preserve the golf course.

And as a former city councilman for Santa Clarita, Smyth said he doesn't like the idea of the state getting involved in local land-use decisions.

"My belief is that the decision should be made by the city and they should work with constituents to find the best fit for the community," he said.

Greuel said she was pleased that Fuentes pulled the bill.

"I look forward to working with all of the stakeholders to preserve the open space for the community," she said.