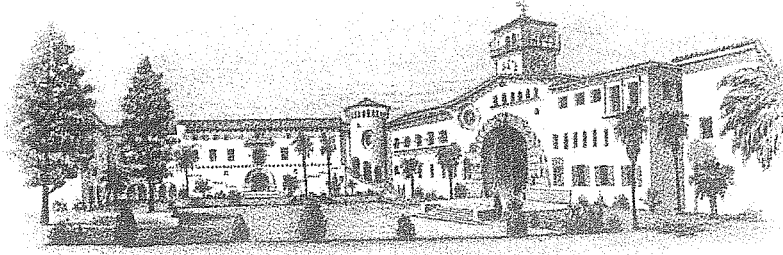


DOREEN FARR
Third District Supervisor



OFFICE OF THE
THIRD DISTRICT SUPERVISOR
County Administration Building
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, California 93101
Telephone: (805) 568-2191
Fax: (805) 568-2883
www.countyofsb.org

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

April 16, 2012

Congressman Don Young
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Young,

I am the County Supervisor representing the Santa Ynez Valley which is located in the third supervisorial district of Santa Barbara County. Our office has recently learned that the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians has requested your assistance in placing land they own, a 1400 acre ranch in the Santa Ynez Valley, into trust through direct federal legislation. I am writing to tell you the reasons why I am strongly opposed to such an action.

The fee to trust process, whether handled through the Bureau of Indian Affairs or through direct Congressional action, was established to assist tribal governments that have demonstrated that the trust acquisition is necessary to achieve economic success and to provide long term fiscal stability for their members. This is not the case here. The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians has achieved great financial success through the establishment of a casino and hotel on their reservation property. The revenues from the hotel and the casino have been substantial enough to not only well provide for the needs of their members but also to purchase other income producing properties in the Santa Ynez Valley such as another hotel and restaurant as well as the 1,400 acre ranch presently zoned for agriculture.

Attached to this letter is an opinion piece I wrote in the local newspaper which outlines the serious economic repercussions Santa Barbara County would face if this large piece of land were taken into trust. The significant loss of tax revenue to the County and to all of the special districts, including schools, which depend upon it would impact all county services. We cannot afford to lose any of this revenue, particularly during the current severe economic downturn. Any proposed development has many other potential impacts including impacts to police and fire services, to traffic and circulation and to the continued viability of agriculture, both on the property in question and on all the properties that surround it. If gaming were also on the property it would obviously only exacerbate those impacts.

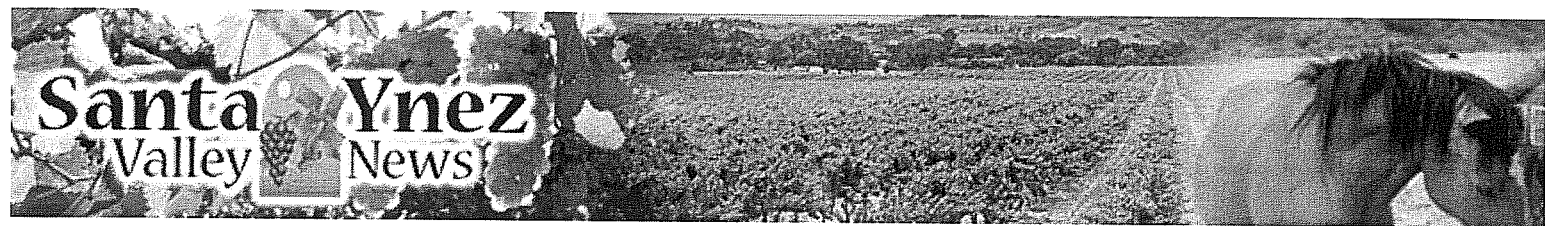
As a former County Planning Commissioner and now an elected County Supervisor , I strongly believe that decisions on land use need to be conducted under local jurisdiction through a transparent process that not only allows, but requires, community input. If the Chumash want to develop their ranch property, or any other property they own that is not within their current reservation boundaries, I would ask that instead of seeking a legislative fix, they work through the County's land use process for the greater benefit of the entire County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doreen Farr". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "F".

Doreen Farr, Chair
Third District Supervisor
Santa Barbara County

cc: Senator Barbara Boxer
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Congresswoman Lois Capps
Congressman Elton Gallegly
Supervisor Salud Carbajal
Supervisor Janet Wolf
Supervisor Joni Gray
Supervisor Steve Lavagnino
Chairman Vincent Armenta, Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians
County CEO Chandra Waller



Tribal annexation would take huge financial toll

Doreen Farr/Guest Commentary

Thursday, December 8, 2011

Recently there have been a number of editorials and letters to the editor regarding the potential annexation into the Chumash reservation of 1,400 acres located near the intersection of Highways 246 and 154.

I would like to expand on my comments from last spring regarding this potential annexation and the impacts it would have on our county.

When land is annexed in a “fee to trust” process, it is taken entirely out of county jurisdiction in perpetuity and added to the reservation of the tribal applicant. If their application is successful, the Chumash would take the 1,400 acres out of the county’s land use jurisdiction and it would become totally exempt from paying any property, sales or transient occupancy tax that might be generated from future development of the property.

As these taxes are the primary sources of revenue for our county’s general fund and for our schools, it is important to understand the potential loss of funding to our educational system, public safety and social services.

In 2005, the county did an analysis of the potential loss of property tax revenue if the Chumash were successful in annexing a 6.9-acre parcel and developing it. The result was that the loss of property taxes in the first 10 years would be \$5.6 million, and at the end of 50 years would total \$42.9 million.

The tribe has stated that they want to build homes on the property for their tribal members. Some community members believe that this type of development will bring needed jobs to our community.

I believe we need to weigh the long-term consequences with the short-term gains if these homes are built on property taken into trust by the Chumash and no longer under the county’s jurisdiction.

Assuming 140 homes valued at \$1 million each, with a 1.2-percent tax rate the first year and a 2-percent tax rate increase in subsequent years, the loss of property tax would be approximately \$1.7 million the first year, \$19 million over 10 years and \$150 million after 50 years.

Depending upon the size of the lots, these homes might only take up 10-20 percent of the property, leaving the balance open to other uses or more development in the future, which also would not generate any tax revenue for the county.

In 2004, there was a development proposal for the property that included a 300-room hotel, a golf course, an equestrian center, 275 homes and associated infrastructure, which would probably take up about half of the property.

If such a project were built and valued at \$415 million, then, using the same property-tax rate assumptions as before, the loss of property taxes could be \$55 million in 10 years and \$450 million in 50 years.

And this doesn't include the loss of tax revenue from any sales tax and transient occupancy tax that the project might also generate.

As you can see, these numbers are staggering, and only estimate out 50 years, although the property would be off the tax rolls in perpetuity.

But what is even more concerning to me is the impact this revenue loss would have on our already strained school budgets, the decline in funding for police and fire services, and the further loss of social services for our most needy residents.

It is for these reasons that I am strongly suggesting again that the tribe not pursue a fee-to-trust application.

Instead, I would ask that they make an application to the county's Planning and Development Department for whatever they see as the housing needs for their tribal members.

Doreen Farr represents the 3rd District on the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors. She can be reached at dfarr@countyofsb.org.