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Laguna finds new friends on council

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By Mike Jasper

Seven months have passed since the Laguna Report was first delivered to City Council, but it's recommendations have yet to become part of city policy.

This could change soon. If Councilman Richard Johnson has anything to say about it, very soon.

"I think we should strike while the iron's hot," Johnson said. "We need to act on this in the most expeditious manner possible."

At Tuesday's meeting of City Council, the "no development below 76 feet" clause was discussed, with help of a map showing which properties will be affected by a no development ordinance. Only three

parcels are within city limits. The rest is county land.

Supervisor Ernie Carpenter said a committee had been formed through the Fish and Wildlife Advisory Board to work on Laguna preservation. He also said a pending remapping of the area by the Federal Emergency Management will change the flood plain from 76 feet to 75 feet, but would be strictly enforced.

"That will about take care of all of your problems with regard to fill and development," Carpenter said.

Bob Sharp, former Laguna Committee Chair, said Congressman Douglas Bosco had just formed a "technical" committee of scientists and environmentalists to work with the Laguna. Sharp will head the nine-member committee,

Laguna . . .

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which will meet every two weeks until December.

According to the map submitted to council by Planning Consultant Bruce Aspinall, about 20 property owners will be affected should a no development under 76 feet ordinance be enacted.

However, City Attorney Larry McLaughlin warned that a no development clause could leave the city open to a lawsuit. McLaughlin said some uses of the land must be open to property owners.

"Leave some use of the property (in an ordinance) and you're pretty safe," McLaughlin said.

Laguna activist Helen Libeu said the committee never intended no development at all, and reminded the council that a linear park in the Laguna floodplain was one of the suggestions of the committee. She accused McLaughlin of creating "a straw man in order to knock it down."

McLaughlin said he agreed with Libeu's suggestion that

"development" be defined. However, he reminded her that he alluded to degrees of development when he spoke of "shades of grey."

After the hearing, City Council seemed unanimous in passing some kind of ordinance on no development. However, Councilman Bill Roventini warned of moving too quickly.

"I would rather spend our legal dollars now to make sure we get this (ordinance) right," Roventini said.

City Manager Mel Davis said he would move as quickly as possible to notify property owners and to make a report on a parcel by parcel basis. He doubted whether the ordinance would have the unanimous approval it apparently did on council.

"There are some property owners in the room who are not speaking, I noticed," Davis said.

The matter was continued to the next city council meeting, Aug. 30.

A small flat sponge or paper towel kept in your refrigerator vegetable bin can absorb much of the excess moisture collecting there.