



THE LEAGUES
OF WOMEN VOTERS,
of the Monterey Peninsula

June 14, 2011
Jane Parker, Chair
Monterey County Board of Supervisors
168 West Alisal Salinas, CA 93901

SUBJECT: APPEAL OF WHISPERING OAKS PROJECT

Dear Supervisor Parker and Members of the Board:

The League of Women Voters of the Monterey Peninsula opposes the proposed project based on our support of land use planning that protects scenic assets, a beneficial environment, and natural resources. Our position on the reuse of Fort Ord specifically supports light industry that is marine oriented or related to education facilities. The proposed project would not only remove 4,400 oak trees and disrupt an existing trail system, it would re-zone the project site from public-quasi public to heavy commercial.

The EIR states the project would have an unavoidable and significant impact on climate change in part due to the removal of the oak tree habitat and loss of a source of CO₂ sequestration. While it appears that there may be a 1:1 replacement of oaks, we question the feasibility of replacing over 4,000 oak trees with the assurance that they would survive and mature. Additionally, Title 21 permits an exception to the 1:1 ratio based on a showing of hardship. Thus, there is no assurance that this measure intended to mitigate climate change impacts as well as impacts to biological resources would ever be implemented.

The FEIR fails to address alternatives that would reduce environmental impacts while still achieving project objectives as required by CEQA. The environmentally superior alternative which would locate the MST facility at the site designated for it in the FORA plan (7th and Gigling) while retaining part of the site for recreational uses was found to be inconsistent with project objectives. An alternative that would locate the MST facility at this site (or at the Marina airport) and that locates a 24-acre business park (the same size as the proposed Project) at the landfill site was not considered even though it would clearly reduce impacts that are otherwise unavoidably significant. It is worth noting that the Marina airport site already has infrastructure improvements in place thus avoiding the need for extensive infrastructure improvements and the removal of thousands of trees.

Finally, we question using the redevelopment process for developing a non-blighted open space area. The County should focus development on the extensive blighted areas existing at former Fort Ord while leaving open space areas and habitats intact.

We urge you to support the Planning Commission's decision and deny the project. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Beverly Bean
President