**Notes from the Fallbrook Planning Group Meeting 3-15-2016**

**(By Martin Jorgensen)**

At the meeting Donna from the Fallbrook Trails Council made a short presentation and afterwards the Planning Group voted unanimously to recommend that the County of San Diego acquire the property along the Santa Margarita River that is currently being sold by the Fallbrook Public Utilities District to the Western Rivers Conservancy. (The county currently owns an adjacent parcel with a staging area.) Western Rivers Conservancy will hold the property temporarily until another long-term buyer can be found. (the property being sold consists of approximately 1400 acres.) The property is currently in escrow which should be finished by the end of the year.

An employee of the district spoke about the project and reiterated the intent of the district to have the purchaser of the property to continue to allow public access to the trail system. He stated the only the reason the district acquired the property initially in the 1940’s was that there was a plan in place at the time to create a water storage reservoir in the canyon. That plan was later scrapped. (there is still a continuing lawsuit United States vs. Fallbrook going on over water rights.) The Fallbrook Land Conservancy and the trails council have been maintaining the trails. He stated that the duty of the district was water supply and sewage disposal and they did not have the resources to manage the property and trail system.

Prior to the discussion about the land sale there was a long discussion about the county’s current revision of its Park Lands Dedication Ordinance (PLDO) and the response to it from the Fallbrook Planning Group. (SDTA and BCHC-SD are meeting with the county to discuss the PLDO next week.) Representative from the county were present and the ordinance was discussed for about two hours. In the end the planning group voted unanimously to recommend the acquisition of active trails be added to the PLDO. The following are my notes and questions from that discussion:

The county goal is three acres of parks for every 1000 people.

Does that include preserves that are not accessible to the public?

The county has 26 acres of parks in Fallbrook.

There is a total of 2400 acres of parks in Fallbrook (counting preserves).

This includes private parks and those who charge admission.

Are private parks part of or affected by the PLDO?

Are preserves part of or affected by the PLDO?

There are two categories of parks in the county- active and passive.

What are the definitions of each?

Santa Margarita is technically a passive (not active) park. Why?

Can PLDO funds only be used for active parks?

Before a park can be developed the maintenance entity must be identified and established.

Park maintenance is often carried out by local agencies and funded by CSA’s or local tax increases

Why is the county looking to acquire more parkland if they don’t have the funds to maintain what they have already?

PLDO funds can be used to acquire and upgrade parks but not for maintenance.