

Educational Center EIR is OK'd

By Maria G. Ortiz-Briones, Hanford Sentinel Reporter

HANFORD - The Hanford Educational Center project is now one step closer to becoming a reality.

The Hanford Joint Union High School District Board of Trustees on Tuesday unanimously approved the final environmental impact report for the educational center after holding a public hearing to take testimony on the project.

The Hanford Educational Center is a joint project of the HJUHS, the College of the Sequoias and the city of Hanford.

The project will combine a third high school site, an expanded COS Community College facility, recreational facilities with a massive sports complex and a vocational training center. The nearly 180-acre proposed site for the Hanford Educational Center is on the east side of 13th Avenue between Grangeville and Lacey boulevards.

The purpose of the public hearing was to consider approving a resolution certifying the final EIR, the evaluation of the high school site using the site selection standards established by the California Department of Education and consider approving the project.

The public hearing consisted of a presentation made by HJUHS Superintendent Pete Faconti on the project overview, which included how the concept for the educational center originated, the process for the site selection and as well as an overview of conceptual plan.

There was also a presentation that described the uses of the project.

According to Faconti, the search for where to put the educational center started in 1999 using a Site Selection study to identify the best locations. The site needed to comply with the requirements and recommendations of various state agencies, including the California Department of Education, the California Environmental Quality Act guidelines and Hanford's General Plan.

Faconti said 10 potential sites were considered, but four were eliminated as they were outside Hanford's General Plan area.

The remaining six proposed sites were evaluated on several factors including size, location, safety, accessibility, land use and ownership, geology, soil and topography, public services and utilities and environment. The sites were scored based on the criteria defined by the project goals and state requirements. That left three sites for consideration. From those three, two has been purchased to build residential subdivisions, therefore leaving the project with the location on the west side of Hanford.

Faconti said the vision of the project is to create opportunities not only for high school students but for the entire community by improving access to a higher education, increasing vocational education and having additional community recreational facilities.

The public hearing also featured a presentation by district consultant Mike Paoli. He reviewed key documents such as the final EIR, the staff report and resolution regarding the educational center, and a presentation by Hanford City Manager Jan Reynolds on the city status of the general plan. Then the hearing was opened to public testimony.

The EIR evaluates how the project will effect it's environment. It includes issues such as air quality, noise, traffic, urban sprawl, agricultural resources, mineral resources, cultural resources and water supply.

The purpose of the report is to identify potential problems that the project would bring and to offer solutions. Therefore, the EIR includes significant impacts of the proposed project and mitigation measures that were identified in the EIR to lessen or avoid the impacts.

The main concerns raised by the EIR were loss of farmland and the potential for urban growth on the west side of Hanford.

During the public hearing it was addressed that loss of farmland would be inevitable as Hanford is surrounded by farmland and continues to grow. Therefore the district adopted a Statement of Overriding Considerations, which means that the need of project outweighs the environmental issues. If the proposed site were not used for the construction of the project, that farmland would still be lost as the city general plan for land use and growth in the following 20 years extends urban development to 13th Avenue. Therefore that site would be most likely to be converted into houses. Many parcels of land around that proposed area are already slated for residences.

In regards to the concern that the project would induce urban sprawl to the west side of 13th Avenue, the city general plan includes objective, policies and programs aimed at protecting farmland and limiting urban development to land within the city's planning area not passing 13th Avenue. The city general plan influences urban growth to the west through the placement of water and sewer infrastructure and the call for city's growth.

According the city representatives, once the growth has reached the capacity of the existing infrastructure, the general plan calls for channeling growth to the east by building infrastructure in that direction.

The final EIR also includes comment letters received on the Draft EIR and the responses of the HJUHS, the lead agency of this project, to the comments.

Peaker: Henrietta plant, in operation since summer, is commissioned

Judy Finney, Lemoore Advance

LEMOORE--The GWF peaker power plant south of Naval Air Station Lemoore on 25th Avenue was officially commissioned last Thursday, Sept. 19 when more than 100 local and state dignitaries met to speak of the success the local plant represents.

According to GWF spokesperson Riley Jones, the plant is capable of producing 90 megawatts of electricity, or enough energy to supply 100,000 homes. Jones also said it took 110 days to build the plant which has already been on-line for about 500 hours.

Henrietta Power Plant is a peak plant which doesn't come on-line until there is a demand for electricity above what can be produced by general electrical plants such as peak hours of energy demand.

Powered by a 747 natural gas jet engine, the Henrietta Plant is the second of three peaker plants GWF will have operational sometime this year. GWF operates a plant near Hanford and one is under construction at Tracy.

The plant will do more than provide needed energy.

According to Duane Nelson, president and CEO of GWF, the plant will bring in about \$1 million in local taxes. He also estimated that it will provide about \$32,000 to local coffers annually through purchases of supplies and materials.

"We are making a difference," Nelson said.

Nelson explained that the new plant's state-of-the-art construction means less air pollution than older plants plus it will recharge the local aquifer to offset its groundwater use.

Assemblyman Dean Florez, D-Shafter, said the plant was built because "people had a vision and were willing to put their money where their mouths are."

[Letter to the Editor, Modesto Bee](#)

See that dirty air

A picture is worth a thousand words. You should be taking pictures of the sky in the western valley so that the next time the Bay Area politicians claim that their dirty air does not pollute our valley you will have the visual evidence that it does.

Look to the west. There is visible smoke pouring over the hills. Whether you can see it or not, that is evidence that their dirty air drifts over here fairly quickly.

DAVID ABLETT

Modesto

[Letter to the Editor, Fresno Bee](#)

Get on the bus

By Gerald Kroeker
Fresno

Spare the air. Spare the land. Spare the trees.
Save time, energy and money. No more street widening, as on Chestnut Avenue. No new parking lots. Invest the money in special-event buses -- no diesel buses -- both small and large.

Most schools and shopping centers are within walking distance of our homes. If you must drive, park at these lots.

Have special-event buses between these schools and shopping centers, to Fresno State and the downtown stadium.

To encourage bus riders, merchants could donate small prizes at each game for those who ride buses to the event. Give the merchant free advertising at that game.

How about shoppers' special for the big sales days?

Think: Ride a bus, be dropped off at the front door or gate, then be returned to your area.

Riding a bus will be cheaper than a parking lot fee.