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Tensions between towns rise

By DEMORRIS LEE, Staff Writer

As the towns of Cary and Holly Springs grow together, they are growing apart. And it's a line that's causing the rift. Cary officials told residents Tuesday night that the failure to reach a boundary agreement between the two western Wake municipalities forced them to set into motion an involuntary annexation of nearly 2,500 acres.

At the same time Tuesday night, Holly Springs' commissioners unanimously approved a resolution that said they had no intentions of forcibly annexing the area.

The meetings followed a week of escalating tension and rhetoric between the two towns. Cary officials say they are simply protecting their interest. Holly Springs officials say the town's character is being attacked.

Last week, Cary Mayor Glen Lang told reporters that Holly Springs was not negotiating honestly when discussing a boundary that would guide where both towns can grow. Cary's Town Council put off consideration of a proposed service agreement that would have divided more than 700 acres between Cary and Holly Springs after being informed that Holly Springs would not adopt the agreement as proposed.

"I'm really angered by the audacity of Mayor [Glen] Lang in telling us that Holly Springs is dishonest," said Chet VanFossen, a Holly Springs commissioner. "We have done nothing dishonest, but for [Cary] to do a midnight end run for something that we have been negotiating for the last two years is contemptible. I wish [Lang] was here and I would look him in the eye and tell him that he is the dishonest person."

Contacted Tuesday night, Lang said, "A statement that foolish doesn't deserve a reply. I'll leave it to the next mayor."

In a special meeting last week, the Cary board voted to begin an involuntary annexation of 2,396 acres where an estimated 4,722 people live. Cary Town Manager Bill Coleman said he suggested the process to protect the town's \$64 million infrastructure investment in the area.

Holly Springs Mayor Dick Sears said Holly Springs never stopped negotiating but did take the public's comments seriously and presented options to Cary. Several landowners did not want their properties split, as the boundary proposal suggested.

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Holly Springs Town Manager Carl Dean said Tuesday night that the original boundary was never off the table. He said Cary was offered alternatives, and commissioners still have the opportunity to vote on the original proposal at their meeting Dec. 16. "I find it extremely difficult to understand how we got to where we are now," Dean said. "It's difficult to comprehend."

'Stop Cary'

On Tuesday evening, Cary held the second of two information meetings about the involuntary annexation. All 200 seats were filled, mostly with folks wearing red, representing the Boston Tea Party, a symbol of taxation without representation. Some people had tea bags pinned to their shirts.

The crowd at times was unruly, often shouting, grunting and waving signs that said "Stop Cary."

"The idea was that government was supposed to serve the people," said Jim Krug, who lives in Dutchman Downs, one of the areas due to be annexed. "Now, it's like government is running roughshod over people, and it's not fair. Cary is working to expand its tax base. They never consulted anyone about how we felt."

Ricky Barker, associate director of Cary's planning department, could barely complete his sentences as he tried to detail the annexation process without being shouted down. He reminded residents that state law gives Cary the authority for the annexation.

"Slavery was legal at one time in this country, and that was not right, either," one man shouted.

Ron Thoreson, a resident of Dutchman Downs, said property owners are gearing up for a fight. Some residents have created a Web site called StopCary.com and are boycotting Cary merchants during the holidays. Thoreson said the community also is checking into legal options.

"We will continue to mobilize people and create a public awareness and fight the process," Thoreson said.

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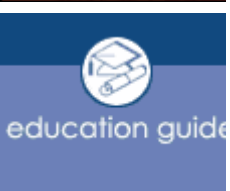


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