

The Cary News

- WEATHER -



CURRENT: 28 °F
Sunny

TODAY: High 50°F; Low 24°F. Sunny, but chilly.

TOMORROW: High 54°F; Low 30°F. Plenty of sunshine.

- NEWS -

Residents give Cary officials earful on annexation

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Residents give Cary officials earful on annexation Process, plan peeve crowd at meeting

By ADAM
ARNOLD, STAFF
WRITER

Brian and Marie Dexter live "less than a block away" from Cary in the Holly Brook subdivision.

They found out Thursday — Thanksgiving Day — that Cary has plans to close that gap for them and more than 4,700 other people in more than 50 subdivisions who stand to be involuntarily annexed in areas south of Cary and east of Holly Springs.

"I don't know if there's anything for or against it yet," Brian Dexter said just after they settled in for an informational meeting in Cary Town Council chambers Tuesday night.

Brian Dexter may have been the most diplomatic potential annexee in the room. The consensus of the other 200 or so who attended the meeting was clear: they're against it.

Spleen and spite

The crowd filled both the auditorium and spilled into the Town Hall lobby.

The audience's spleen was evident throughout. Several people asked how Cary could make such a presentation, which they said was tantamount to taxation without representation, in front of an American flag.

Hissers and boers dismissed the town's explanation that the move was necessary to protect \$64 million in infrastructure investment in the area.

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Land grab was another theory residents put forward, saying the plan is a cover so the town can garner the tax base that development around the yet-to-be built Interstate 540 extension in the area would generate. Others saw a more immediate motive.

"You're using us for a very expensive spite fence with your neighbor," Judith Latham of Dutchman Downs said.

Ricky Barker, the town's associate director of planning, and Town Manager Bill Coleman faced the crowd.

"The majority of people are not going to be happy about it," Barker said. "We understand this."

Barker steered the meeting through constant heckling, explaining the town's rationale for its action, the annexation process and questions and answers.

"We don't care about the process, we want to stop it," a man shouted from the audience.

During the question-and-answer period, Joe Sciolino of Dutchman Downs asked about a published report that the Holly Springs Board of Commissioners planned to vote on a resolution pledging not to annex in the area.

"Whether or not that's a commitment of Holly Springs I don't really know," Coleman said. "We certainly don't have that in writing."

However, if Holly Springs is willing to reach a boundary agreement, "annexation is a whole different issue," Coleman said.

Coleman could not be reached Wednesday for his reaction to comments from Holly Springs Town Manager Carl Dean that the Holly Springs Board of Commissioners could vote on the original boundary later this month.

Cary Town Council member Julie Robison, who spent the meeting with the overflow crowd in the lobby, said that serious interest about the agreement from Holly Springs would force her to take another look at the situation.

"If they were willing to consider the urban services boundary as it was put forward, then I think we would have more options," Robison said.

Robison was the only Cary council member in

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attendance. By the time she arrived, the auditorium had already filled. She watched the meeting on a closed-circuit television in the lobby with several dozen others.

Robison got an earful from her companions, she said.

Many had questions about the quick notice and the timing of the announcement so near Thanksgiving when people were either distracted or out of town and about what terms such as extraterritorial jurisdiction and involuntary annexation mean.

"A lot of people want you to hear them out," Robison said. Holly Springs response

While the meeting in Cary was under way, Holly Springs' Board of Commissioners offered its own response with a resolution saying the town has no intention of annexing in the area.

"We have no intention of annexing — period," Holly Springs Mayor Dick Sears said Wednesday.

Holly Springs Town Manager Carl Dean said that the original service boundary proposal was never off the table and the board could make a decision at its Dec. 16 meeting.

"I find it extremely difficult to understand how we got to where we are now," Dean said. "It's difficult to comprehend."

Agreement unraveled?

At a special meeting Nov. 24, Cary's Town Council approved a resolution of intent to annex the two targeted areas to create a permanent boundary with Holly Springs. The more northerly portion consists of Dutchman Downs and a handful of other neighborhoods in unincorporated Wake County. The area to the south comprises several dozen subdivisions encircling large farm parcels owned by the Pierce and Olive families.

Also included in the southern area were parcels in the Middle Creek area, toward which Cary has been expanding for some time.

Coleman said both areas meet the state standard for urban development, as at least 60 percent of the areas is subdivided into lots of three acres or less.

The land has been included in Cary's land-use plan since 1996. Documents provided by Cary show the



southern area west to Pierce Olive Road was included in Wake County's 1997 land-use plan as being in Cary's short- and long-range urban service area. The remainder was not designated for either Cary or Holly Springs. The two towns had pursued an urban-service boundary agreement to determine how to divide the undesignated area.

Cary and Holly Springs had been working for two years on a utility service boundary agreement. The towns had been set to approve it before it unraveled. The move toward involuntary annexation came after the proposed agreement between the two towns went bad over the course of the last several weeks when it appeared to Cary officials that Holly Springs had approached landowners already on Cary's side of the line about possible voluntary annexation.

Coleman said the action was necessary to protect Cary's \$64 million infrastructure, mostly related to the town's south water-reclamation facility and an area community center.

Cary officials have said involuntary annexation became necessary last month when it was learned Holly Springs had approached the Olive family about a possible voluntary annexation. That action would have cut into the area the agreement would have put behind Cary's urban services boundary for which sewer capacity is already in place.

"We had no other choice from our perspective," Barker said. "We didn't want to do it. We wanted to come up with an agreement."

Next steps

Coleman and Barker tried to offer assurance that the process is a long way from over and outlined a series of additional meetings and milestones to be met before the council makes a final decision.

Notice will go out to property owners next week of the town's intent to annex.

At its meeting Dec. 11, the Cary council is expected to approve the annexation report and plan of services.

Public information meetings are set for Jan. 14 and 15 at the Middle Creek and Herb Young community centers, respectively.

A pair of public hearings during council meetings are scheduled for Feb. 12 and 26.

The calendar calls for the council to adopt the annexation ordinances March 11.

If the process proceeds as planned, the areas will become part of the town March 31, 2005.

"Is this a done deal? No it's not a done deal," Coleman told the crowd. "That's why the process takes so long."

'We're scared'

Taylor Nute of Dutchman Downs said the town has not communicated well with the affected residents and the process seems "cut and dried," Nute said.

"For us, it's the first time," Nute said. "We're new. We're scared." As he was leaving, Brian Dexter said he still had not reached a conclusion, but skepticism was creeping in.

"I don't know how much benefit we're going to get from this," he said. His wife had taken a firmer stance.

"I don't think we're going to get any benefit from it," Marie Dexter said. "It's Cary greed."

Demorris Lee of The News & Observer contributed to this report.

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