

Oversight board postpones sale of Tres Hermanos Ranch, demanding Industry's plans for the land



Next
1 of 3

Santos Kreimann, chairman of the Oversight Board of the Successor Agency to the Industry Urban-Development Agency, left, and Vice Chairman Michael Gregoryk, are frustrated with City of Industry's lateness in providing the board information at a meeting in Industry on Monday, Jan. 23, 2017. The meeting was held to update and discuss the fate of Tres Hermanos, 2,500 acres of land near pristine ranch land the City of Industry has offered to buy for \$100 million. (Photo by Watchara Phomicinda, San Gabriel Valley Tribune SCNG)

0 COMMENTS

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PUBLISHED: January 23, 2017 at 11:27 pm | UPDATED: August 30, 2017 at 6:00 am

INDUSTRY >> An oversight board tasked with selling a 2,450-acre ranch located within Diamond Bar and Chino Hills delayed voting on a \$100 million offer from the City of Industry Monday after board members expressed unease about selling land without knowing the city's intent.

Board members demanded the city reveal their plans for the **Tres Hermanos Ranch** by their next meeting on Feb. 7, when they are expected to determine the fate of the land, one of the largest, untouched swaths on the borders of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Orange counties. "Let's be honest, open and transparent about what we are going to do," said Santos Kreimann, chairman of the oversight board, assembled by county and local officials to sell off Industry's redevelopment agency's extensive land holdings.

The City of Industry is trying to retain the property required to be sold off under the state dissolution of redevelopment in 2012.

The City Council has made clear "the land will be preserved for open space, public uses, and public facilities," said Industry City Manager Paul Philips. However, Kreimann noted the current deed does not restrict the city to a specific public use or from selling off portions to a developer.

"There is nothing in there that says the property is going to be specifically for open space or recreational uses or what have you," Kreimann said. "Not having a deed restriction means you can do whatever it is you want."

Industry City Attorney Jamie Casso said state law requires a city purchasing land outside the city limits to use the property for a municipal purpose.

Industry leaders had declined to be more specific regarding their intentions for the last several months. In the past 40 years, Industry has proposed building a series of dams and reservoirs for water storage and hydroelectric power. Those projects never came to fruition.

Casso indicated the city is in the midst of analyzing land uses. “But I am not at liberty to share with you that analysis because it is not completed,” he responded to questioning from Kreimann.

Board member Michael Gregoryk, vice president of Mt. San Antonio College in Walnut, said he would vote against Industry’s purchase if it is unwilling to be more specific about their plans.

“It is a beautiful property,” said Gregoryk, who recently toured the land with Mayor Mark Radecki. “But there needs to be something in writing that says this is what we are going to do.”

He said the terms Industry has used have been too vague and city officials have made no efforts to open Tres Hermanos to the public.

“Public use, when I took the tour, was every gate was locked,” he said. “That’s not public use.”

Industry purchased Tres Hermanos for \$12.1 million in 1978 and quickly transferred the deed to its redevelopment agency. The end of redevelopment forced Industry to bid to obtain the ranch land. Revenues would be used to pay off redevelopment debts as well as flow to the coffers of the state, school districts and other public agencies.

Industry offered \$41 million late last year, but the oversight board **rejected the offer**. Then, on Jan. 13, the city upped their bid by nearly 150 percent **to \$100 million**. Tres Hermanos would be added to 3,300 adjacent acres previously purchased by Industry that run south through undeveloped Tonner Canyon toward the city of Brea.

Industry’s pledge to preserve at least some of the land and block development has gained support from citizen preservation groups, the city of La Puente and the San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership.

The oversight board was supposed to vote on the sale on Monday but Kreimann pushed off a decision until Feb. 7, because he said the board did not have enough time to review the offer. He indicated if Industry does not provide more details or add deed restrictions requiring open space, the board could deny Industry’s bid and put the property out to auction.

Philips said Industry does not need to provide a detailed plan. “It is not required. The city has first right of refusal. We’ll see what the (redevelopment) Successor Agency wants to do and go from there. But we certainly have our offer in and it is public purpose and open space. And that’s our commitment.”