

## ***Vote on tower delayed***

*By Jonathan Edwards | Enterprise staff writer | August 04, 2010 09:00*

WOODLAND - Under pressure from environmental and farming interests, Yolo County supervisors on Tuesday went against their staff's recommendation and held off on approving a 365-foot radio tower at the county landfill.

Santa Rosa-based Results Radio wants to build the tower at the landfill, about two miles northeast of Davis, and won unanimous approval from the Planning Commission in May.

Owners of Conaway Ranch, the 17,300 acres of mostly farmland northeast of Davis, appealed the decision, sending it to the Board of Supervisors for consideration Tuesday.

Conaway Ranch won its appeal for six extra weeks to study the project. In a 3-2 decision, the board delayed its decision. Board Chair Helen Thomson of Davis and Supervisor Matt Rexroad of Woodland dissented.

'We just haven't had the time to take a look at it,' said Tovey Giezentanner, Conaway spokesman. 'This kind of jumped up on us.'

Other environmental groups, including Woodland-based Tuleyome and the Sierra Club Yolano chapter, also pushed for the extension, all citing worries about birds running into the tower and dying.

'The site is completely inappropriate,' said Davis resident Eileen Samitz. Because it is so close to wetlands, 'birds are bound to collide' with such a 'hazard,' she said.

By restoring these wetlands, 'we've invited these birds from all over the world,' she continued. 'Now we'd put some of them in harm's way.'

The owners of Conaway Ranch had plenty of time to look at the issue between when they appealed the Planning Commission's decision in May and now, said David Temblador, a Sacramento-based lawyer representing Results Radio. Instead, 'it would appear as though they've done nothing.'

In contrast, the county hired an environmental consultant, Jim Estep, who reinforced the county's findings that the tower would pose 'less than significant' danger to birds.

'We believe the county has done precisely what the appellant is asking you to do today,' Temblador said.

Moreover, Results Radio will reduce the risk to birds by running a strobe light at night and attaching visible 'diverters' to the wires supporting the tower, all in an effort to steer birds away from the tower.

The communications company told the board it is switching course and now is willing to build a free-standing tower without wires, something it previously said was too expensive.

Constructing a free-standing tower would cost about \$175,000 compared to \$75,000 for one with support wires, said David Morrison, assistant director of planning and public works.

'We're going above and beyond,' Temblador said.

A group of UC Davis students showed up, pushing the board to quash the appeal. The student-run KDVS radio station would use the tower to increase its potential audience from 200,000 to 500,000 listeners.

'KDVS is dedicated to the expansion of exposure of culture of Yolo County' and has been trying to get a stronger signal for a decade, said Neil Rud, general manager of the radio station.

'If you travel outside the Davis area, you lose the KDVS signal pretty easily,' he said. 'This tower construction is such a tremendous opportunity.'

The benefits the tower would bring to the community - including the boosted signal for KDVS, local advertising opportunities for small businesses and enhanced communication at the landfill - outweigh any possible downsides, Thomson said.

And a six-week delay won't change any of the information on the table, she said.

'I feel the material we have before us and all the comments we've received answer the questions I had and the public raised,' Thomson added.

By pushing the decision off, supervisors put the tower at risk of getting delayed continuously and 'kicked around the county' as people decide they don't want it, she said.

A tower would be a boon to the area, said Supervisor Jim Provenza of Davis, but he still worries about birds getting killed.

'We're less than a mile from the city of Davis wetlands and two miles from the (Yolo Basin) Wildlife Area,' Provenza said. 'I'm a little bit nervous about that. I still have some concerns.'

Provenza questioned Estep's report, saying it lacked sufficient backup to support the ultimate claims.

But what will the six-week continuance produce? many officials asked.

'It's unclear exactly what that continuance would accomplish,' Morrison said. 'What new avian research could be done in such a short period of time?'

The board is scheduled to address the issue again at its next meeting on Sept. 14.