



Editorial: Compromise needed in Angwin

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Much like the community of Angwin, where Measure U is pitting neighbor against neighbor, our editorial board is divided between those who will vote “yes” on Measure U in Tuesday’s election and those who will vote “no.” We have, however, been discussing the pros and cons of this issue quite reasonably, without the shades of rancor and hyperbole that have clouded productive discussion of the measure.

Our unified decision, as a divided board, is to endorse neither a “Yes” nor “No” vote on Measure U. Instead, our message to PUC officials and Save Rural Angwin representatives is to come back to the table together to reach a compromise. To sit down and talk. To cast aside fear and work together for the betterment of the community.

However, because taking a position asking for a new beginning is tantamount to endorsing “No on U,” we wanted to share some of the arguments from both sides that brought us to this position.

The most persuasive “Yes” arguments point to Measure U allowing rural, agricultural lands in Angwin the same protections from development other ag land enjoys — in essence bringing Angwin into the Ag Preserve. That Angwin was excluded from the protections of Measure J (1990) and Measure P (2008) and the County General Plan update (2008) is, according to Measure U supporters, both inadvertent and unfortunate and due to various lawsuits at those times which prevented Angwin’s inclusion. They argue Measure U will bring uniformity to lands in Angwin that are in ag or open space use, and allow development on these lands only by countywide voter approval.

The “No on U” argument, much as the anti-Ag Preserve sentiments of 1968, focuses on preserving private property rights — specifically those of Pacific Union College which has been operating in Angwin since 1909 and will continue operating there.

Its neighbors, especially those who run SRA, don’t trust the motives of the college’s board of trustees, don’t trust Knight and don’t want to see the college selling 1,500 acres of land to a developer.

No one wants that unknown developer to build a small city complete with houses, apartment complexes and a shopping center in Angwin. The infrastructure, including streets and roads and wastewater systems, isn’t adequate to handle a small city. Howell Mountain Road, for example,

would not be able to handle either the increased construction traffic or an increased number of vehicles resulting from a small city development.

The fear, voiced by SRA and others, is that if Measure U fails, PUC will sell the land, a small city will be built and the residents of all of Napa County will have to pay for the infrastructure, police and fire and other needed services.

There is no current proposal to build that city. When a development plan is put forward, the public would be expected to comment on it and PUC would be required to get the necessary permits from the county. As part of that process, numerous public hearings would be held.

PUC officials have developed a master plan for the campus. According to Knight, it means moving the commercial space 700 feet and refreshing the College Market and hardware store.

According to SRA, the master plan calls for moving the current Angwin Plaza and building a new 55,000-square-foot shopping area and building new houses and apartments on the current shopping plaza site.

There's a large measure of distrust between the two groups and it's splitting Angwin in half. SRA claims that the passage of Measure U would start the healing process in the community; Knight said Measure U is extreme and PUC has to fight it, because it will have damaging and unintended consequences for the college.

A year after she arrived in December 2009, Knight convinced the school's board of trustees to drop the controversial eco-village concept. In its place is a plan for PUC to monetize its assets, that is sell 1,500 acres of land to increase its endowment. PUC is asset rich and cash poor. The sale of the land would help the college in several ways: It could use the interest from an increased endowment to provide student scholarships, rebuild and update facilities, including Irwin Hall, and provide housing and salaries for faculty and staff.

The enrollment of PUC has been steadily going up in the last three years. Currently it has 1,616 students, which is the highest enrollment in the past seven years. Its staff has focused on cutting expenses and increasing revenues and this past year finished \$2.1 million in the black, compared to \$3.9 million in the red three years ago, when Knight first arrived on campus. Its current endowment fund is \$21 million.

If it passes, Measure U would redesignate some 25 acres of land from Urban Residential to Agriculture, Watershed and Open Space and another 26 acres to Public-Institutional. It also would prohibit further subdivision of PI lands and permit modernization and expansion of the existing sewage treatment facility located west of Howell Mountain Road.

According to Minh Tran, county counsel for Napa County, the prohibition of subdividing PI lands, including parcels in the Napa State Hospital/Skyline Park area and Napa County Airport area, likely conflicts with state law and the Subdivision Map Act. An independent legal analysis has estimated the county could spend as much as \$1.3 million if Measure U passes.

We urge both sides to sit down, lay their cards on the table — PUC officials have been particularly reluctant to release specific information about the college's plans — and reach a neighborly compromise.