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Agency approves Antioch's request to provide water services for power plant

By Paul Bugarino
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 02/09/2011 05:26:45 PM PST

Updated: 02/10/2011 05:50:05 PM PST

MARTINEZ -- In a move that will keep construction of a \$650 million power plant on track, a Contra Costa County land-planning agency agreed this week that Antioch can provide water and wastewater services outside its jurisdiction before annexing the property.

GenOn Energy is constructing a 760-megawatt natural gas-fired facility just east of the Antioch border. The company needs water hookups to start construction, which it hopes to start in April.

Before voting 6-1 in favor of Antioch's request, the Local Agency Formation Commission expressed frustration that Antioch and the county had not reached a deal on how to share property taxes after more than three years of discussions. County Supervisor Gayle Uilkema, of Lafayette, was the lone dissenting vote.

Wednesday's decision went against the recommendation of commission staff to have an agreement on property tax sharing in place as an assurance that annexation would happen.

"I wish we could just lock you guys in a room and

not let you out until a deal is done," Commissioner Dwight Meadows said. "Instead, we get to be the fall guys. It's a little bit irritating."

Antioch City Manager Jim Jakel told the commission that the two sides have been working on a tax-sharing deal but have had to overcome several hurdles, including the cost of annexing a neighborhood off Viera Avenue that drew international attention in 2009 because of the Jaycee Dugard kidnapping saga.

That residential

area should be included in annexation, according to county planning staff. A city study found that about \$18 million in water and sewer improvements would be needed in the Viera area to prepare it for annexation.

"It's not your typical tax-transfer agreement. The cost threw both sides for a serious loop," Jakel said.

"It's been a very complicated process," added county Supervisor Federal Glover, of Pittsburg, who also sits on the commission.

The city and county recently agreed to work on resolving the revenue-sharing issue, and to address issues such as sewer and water extensions in the area and possible residential opposition to development.

As an incentive to get a deal done, GenOn President John Chillemi told the commission that his company would give \$1 million to Antioch and \$1 million to the county if annexation is completed before the end of 2012.

The local agency commission also asked for monthly progress reports from the city and county on negotiations.

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