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Supporters of Redlands development face setback

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The slow-growth advocacy group, Redlands Association, suffered a legal setback Tuesday when a San Bernardino Superior Court judge ordered that ballot language be stricken from an argument defending a proposed initiative.

The association submitted Measure P for the Nov. 8 city election. It would limit growth and land uses and strengthen Measure U, which was approved in 1997 and established principles of managed development.

It has pitted pro-development and business forces called Redlands Coalition against the association, a group of residents.

The coalition of business owners, local developers, Chamber of Commerce officials, police officers and firefighters believe, should the measure be successful, that developers would bypass Redlands and force shoppers to go elsewhere. That would cause the city to miss out on sales and property tax revenue, as well as developer fees that help pay for city services.

Initiative supporters say the measure would preserve the quality of life because the proposed measure would strengthen the city's General Plan and further manage growth.

The coalition asked San Bernardino Superior Court Judge Bob Krug to strike its ballot argument rebuttal that claims city spending has gone up 74 percent in five years. The rebuttal countered the claim in an opposition argument that the measure could threaten the city's finances.

Both groups submitted arguments in support and opposition of the initiative and then rebuttals to those arguments.

Jim Sutton, attorney for former Mayor Carole Beswick, challenged the claim and the statement that the measure would not affect city income from the "doughnut hole" or future development there.

The judge ruled in Sutton's favor and said the spending statement was inaccurate because of a lack of specifics.

"The fault I find with that is the statement should use the years involved and the numbers involved so the public can do the arithmetic themselves," Krug said.

Redlands Association President Bill Cunningham said he calculated the spending figure using the adopted budgets of 2000 and 2005.

Sutton countered the years 2000 to 2005 equal seven fiscal years. In fiscal year 1999-2000 to fiscal year 2005-'06, spending has gone from an audited \$29.7 million to an estimated \$51.3 million. That represents nearly a 73 percent increase over seven fiscal years.

Sutton said an analysis done by the Rose Institute of State and Local Government showed the initiative could slow and curtail development and could jeopardize the sales-tax sharing agreement for the "doughnut hole."

An agreement now in effect gives the city 90 percent of the sales-tax revenue and the county the remaining 10 percent in exchange for providing water, sewer, police and fire services to the unincorporated county area surrounded by Redlands.

But Cunningham has disagreed the doughnut hole would be affected because he said binding agreements with the county cannot be pre-empted by the initiative.