

Here is the email to Supervisor Candace Andersen from Sandy Kane, a local San Ramon resident and college student at Diablo Valley College, regarding the proposed Creekside Memorial Park, sent on April 12, 2013:

Hello Candace,

My name is Sandy Kane and I am a local San Ramon resident and college student at Diablo Valley College. I am currently doing a project with a few of my fellow students. We are analyzing the campaigns that are both for and against this proposed Creekside Memorial Park Project. I was hoping if you could spare some time out of your busy schedule to share with me any opinions you might have on this project. I know the proposed site is not in your jurisdiction, but it is rather right along the border. But we would still greatly appreciate your opinion.

Has your office been getting many opinions from residents in your district for or against this project?

Since the project is right behind The Windermere Housing Development in San Ramon. As I am sure you are aware of, the area does have a large cultural diversity, and most specifically a significant Asian population. Many Asian cultures do still revere old customs and for lack of a better word, superstitions. After doing a very general poll, for our project, however, we found many residents that were opposed to the idea of having a cemetery built directly behind their homes because they believed that it would be bad feng shui and that the spirits from the gravesites would bring great unluck into their homes. And of course, we found many who were just concerned about their property values being negatively effected.

What is your response to the resident's concerns about the Creekside Memorial Park?

We understand that the developer believes that San Ramon, Danville, and Alamo residents want a cemetery close to where they live. In an interview with ABC news, the developer, Mr. Corrie states that the residents of these towns want to be buried in their hometown and close to their families; with the Alamo and Danville cemeteries at capacity right now, he believes this is a great resolution.

However, in our research we found that indeed those older and smaller cemeteries are at capacity, the cemetery in Hayward although sounds far, is in actuality only 0.3 miles farther than the proposed site for the Creekside Memorial Park, not to mention other cemeteries in the East Bay area that are also not at capacity yet.

Does the a majority in your district indeed want their own cemetery in San Ramon?

We also talked to Damian Hardman at the county offices who edited the Environmental Impact Report, and he stated that they found that the project does pose a significant impact to local plant and animal species in the area. He also stated that because the project is outside the urban limit line, there is not enough water to complete nor sustain the property as proposed. Even though this sounds like a victory for the opponents, Mr. Hardman informed me it is still his duty to find and propose recommendations to the developer.

Has your office been getting many opinions both for or against this project?

We have also talked to local residents in Mary Piepho's district who are more greatly impacted by this project. Through talking to these homeowners it is hard not to sympathize with some of their frustrations. We were told that Ms. Piepho's response to their concerns is that she simply has no comment on the matter until the the Final Environmental Impact Report is out (which is due out later this month). I talked to a couple who were quite disheartened to hear that kind of reply from their own elected official. After all, this project has been in works for years. It is hard to believe, especially, that an elected official, has no opinion on a matter which has loomed over these residents heads' for years.

I certainly hope you will help us with our class project by answering a few questions and providing us with any insight that you may have. We certainly appreciate your time.

Thank you so much.

Sincerely,

Sandy Kane

Here is the email response from Supervisor Candace Andersen to Sandy Kane, a local San Ramon resident and college student at Diablo Valley College, regarding the proposed Creekside Memorial Park, on April 12, 2013:

Hi, Sandy:

I'm happy to provide some answers to your questions. Like my fellow supervisor, Mary Piepho, I'm also very interested in seeing what the final EIR states because I am concerned about the impacts this cemetery might have. My biggest concern is where the water will come from to irrigate the project, and I'd like to see what alternatives there might be to have a cemetery with less grassy turf, and more natural vegetation. I also have concerns about the visual impact – I'm not a big fann of ridgeline "development," including have mausoleum's or other structures visible at the top of the hill. Of course, the impact on traffic, animal habitats, and other significant impacts will also be examined. I anticipate all these things being addressed in the EIR.

It's always very important to me to balance a property owner's rights to do what he or she wants with their property against the impact on the environment and the community. More often than not there are ways to mitigate the impact on neighbors, as well as the environment, which will make a project work. It may not be what a property owner originally envisions, and it may not be the outcome desired by neighbors, but with appropriate public input and direction from the planning agency, a good solution or compromise can often be reached.

I do want to make clear, also, that I don't make up my mind as to how I'm going to vote on a land use matter until I hear all of the testimony and evidence presented at a hearing (and what is

provided leading up to that point). Thus, although I develop opinions about certain aspects of a project, nothing is final until I have all of the information before me and I vote at the Board of Supervisor's Meeting.

Here are my responses to your questions:

Has your office been getting many opinions from residents in your district for or against this project? Yes. One website <http://www.change.org/petitions/contra-costa-county-board-of-supervisors-deny-the-special-use-permit-for-the-creekside-memorial-park-cemetery?response=02a58c2e7b5e> has generated nearly all of the emails I've received in opposition to this project. Through this forum individuals are able to state why they object to this project. Unfortunately, other than a name and city, I'm not given any contact information so there is no ability for me to follow up with these individuals.

I've also received e-mails, phone calls and had conversations with others who strongly support having a cemetery in the Tassajara Valley. They would like to see that property remain "open space" rather than having homes built there one day, they believe there is a strong need for a cemetery in the Tri-Valley region, and given the lack of homes nearby, feel that it would have a minimal impact.

Since the project is right behind The Windermere Housing Development in San Ramon. As I am sure you are aware of, the area does have a large cultural diversity, and most specifically a significant Asian population. Many Asian cultures do still revere old customs and for lack of a better word, superstitions. After doing a very general poll, for our project, however, we found many residents that were opposed to the idea of having a cemetery built directly behind their homes because they believed that it would be bad feng shui and that the spirits from the gravesites would bring great unluck into their homes. And of course, we found many who were just concerned about their property values being negatively effected.

What is your response to the resident's concerns about the Creekside Memorial Park? I am very sensitive to the cultural diversity of our Valley and it has been great to see it growing. I grew up in Hawaii where there is significant cultural diversity and where we were all very respectful of each other's customs and traditions. Although I can understand someone not wanting to be immediately next door to a cemetery, I have been a little surprised by the number of emails stating that it would affect their property values, be unhealthy if it was built, or undesirable for their children. The majority of homes in Windemere/Dougherty Valley will be quite a distance from the proposed cemetery. There is significant open space and a ridgeline buffering most homes. The majority of homeowners and prospective purchasers may not even know that it is in the vicinity.

I also believe that with appropriate landscaping/plantings, restricting structures on the ridgeline, you can generally mitigate any visual impact the cemetery might have. Perhaps by bringing in an expert in Feng Shui it might be possible to mitigate some of the impact to those homes whose owners believe they may be affected, as well.

Coincidentally, I was recently discussing this with friends who live nearly adjacent to the Alamo

Cemetery on La Gonda Way . They love being close to the cemetery – it is a quiet, peaceful place. They much prefer it noisy neighbors or if there were houses on the site.

We understand that the developer believes that San Ramon, Danville, and Alamo residents want a cemetery close to where they live. In an interview with ABC news, the developer, Mr. Corrie states that the residents of these towns want to be buried in their hometown and close to their families; with the Alamo and Danville cemeteries at capacity right now, he believes this is a great resolution.

However, in our research we found that indeed those older and smaller cemeteries are at capacity, the cemetery in Hayward although sounds far, is in actuality only 0.3 miles farther than the proposed site for the Creekside Memorial Park, not to mention other cemeteries in the East Bay area that are also not at capacity yet.

Does the a majority in your district indeed want their own cemetery in San Ramon?

It's hard to say, as I haven't conducted any formal polls on the subject. However, from my discussions with people I meet in person (as opposed to the emails generated from the website), the majority have stated they would like to have a cemetery close by. They don't want to have to travel to Lafayette or Hayward to visit the gravesites of loved ones. They see the Tassajara Valley as a very peaceful, bucolic place to either be buried someday, or to have a loved one buried nearby.

We also talked to Damian Hardman at the county offices who edited the Environmental Impact Report, and he stated that they found that the project does pose a significant impact to local plant and animal species in the area. He also stated that because the project is outside the urban limit line, there is not enough water to complete nor sustain the property as proposed. Even though this sounds like a victory for the opponents, Mr. Hardman informed me it is still his duty to find and propose recommendations to the developer.

Has your office been getting many opinions both for or against this project?

Please see my comments above about the response I have been receiving. The EIR Report is what will help us decide whether the impacts on the environment can be mitigated or balanced out to make this project work for Mr. Corrie. As I mentioned earlier, I have some serious concerns about the water, and it may not be possible to build it as envisioned, but there could be a compromise which would have a less significant effect on water, plants, species, and its visibility. I think Mr. Hardman's comments regarding his duty to find and propose recommendations to the developer are reflective of our need to balance a property owner's rights to do what he wants with his property against the impact on the environment and community.

We have also talked to local residents in Mary Piepho's district who are more greatly impacted by this project. Through talking to these homeowners it is hard not to sympathize with some of their frustrations. We were told that Ms. Piepho's response to their concerns is that she simply has no comment on the matter until the the Final Environmental Impact Report is out (which is due out later this month). I talked to a couple who were quite disheartened to hear that kind of

reply from their own elected official. After all, this project has been in works for years. It is hard to believe, especially, that an elected official, has no opinion on a matter which has loomed over these residents heads' for years.

As I also mentioned above, public officials have a very significant responsibility to not make up their minds until they have all of the evidence before them, particularly for land use matters. The release of the EIR will be very helpful to us on the Board of Supervisors as we look at this project. None of us, including myself, have enough information yet to make that determination. It's very important to keep an open mind about all of the concerns and ideas brought forward.

If you would like to discuss this further, I'm happy to meet with you and your team in my office. Just call the number below and my scheduler would be happy to set something up.

Best regards,

Candace

Candace Andersen

Supervisor, District 2

Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors

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