

From June 9, 2009 TV KGO Channel 7 News transcript

## **Petaluma asphalt plant faces opposition**

PETALUMA, CA (KGO) -- In Sonoma County, the Board of Supervisors has taken an unofficial vote against allowing an asphalt plant to be built next to a bird sanctuary. The straw vote was 3-2. The official vote will be taken July 21, but officials say it's highly unlikely the vote will change.

It has been a while since the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors drew a crowd so large or so polarized about an issue already so well-argued.

"I'm not surprised by the concern of the community," said Aimi Dutra of the Dutra Group. Her father's company wants to build an asphalt plant on county land, just outside the Petaluma city limits. After five years, now they face opposition, and lots of it from residents like Sheri Chlebowski who lives about a mile away.

"I want to breathe clean air," said Chlebowski. "Our pollution is already a problem in this city and this county. This isn't just about, 'hey I don't like the way it looks,' this is going to make my children sick."

The proposed location of the plant includes 37 acres on the river next to a bird sanctuary.

"Wrong plant. Wrong place. Destructive of habitat," said David Keller who opposes the plant.

"It is an environmentally sound project with an environmentally superior plant," said Dutra.

Dutra claims the plant will operate with no harmful emissions and that it will reduce pollution by using barges for deliveries, instead of trucks. Opponents believe the plant poses too much risk to Shollenberger Park. They say the land sits in an agricultural corridor.

"Why the county board is willing to amend our general plan, I don't understand," said Chlebowski.

No matter how the board had voted, this fight would have continued. Opponents have federal and state legislators on their side. The city of Petaluma has threatened legal action.

In Sonoma County, this truly has become a philosophical division of north and south.

"I think things are misunderstood in this project. I think there's a lot of misinformation and hysteria, and somewhat scare tactics going on out there," said Dutra.