

Clark County to Let Coyote Springs Developer Build Infrastructure

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LAS VEGAS (AP) - The Clark County Commission has invoked a little-used law to let developer Harvey Whittemore start a planned golf community of some 159,000 homes 50 miles northeast of Las Vegas.

Commissioners created a water resources general improvement district Tuesday that will allow Whittemore to begin laying water and sewer lines to his first 49,000 homes without waiting for the county to fund and build the needed infrastructure.

Establishing the Coyote Springs General Improvement District also insulated local taxpayers and water ratepayers from subsidizing Whittemore's 40-year plan to develop a community straddling the Clark and Lincoln county lines, officials said.

"Taxpayers in Las Vegas aren't going to have to pay to run a water line and sewer lines 50 miles out of town," said Commissioner Tom Collins, whose district includes land Whittemore and Pardee Homes are developing. The county currently has no nearby water pipelines or treatment facilities in the area.

The improvement district calls for Whittemore and his partners to pay the \$120 million upfront cost, and to later be reimbursed at the discretion of the County Commission.

The Las Vegas Valley Water District and the Clark County Water Reclamation District will manage the Coyote Springs water and wastewater systems.

"They're going to build it with their own money, build it to our standards and then turn it over to us for operation," County Manager Virginia Valentine said.

The agreement also calls for Whittemore to secure water rights for Coyote Springs without tapping into Southern Nevada Water Authority supplies.

Whittemore, a multimillionaire lobbyist-turned-developer, has obtained more than 4,000 acre-feet of water rights from Lincoln County to supply initial development.

Residents, who according to plans would begin moving in by January 2008, will be assessed a \$45 monthly water infrastructure charge. If there is sufficient money, county commissioners, acting as district trustees, can refund it to Whittemore.

"This is a unique deal," said Dick Wimmer, deputy general manager of the water district. "But never has there been a development of this scale detached from existing development."