

Walnut to consider legal action against Mt. SAC for parking structure



By [Steve Scauzillo](#),

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WALNUT >> The City Council will meet in closed session Wednesday night to consider whether to sue Mount San Antonio College for going ahead with construction of a five-story \$45 million parking garage directly across the street from homes.

The consideration of “possible litigation — status report on proposed parking structure, Mt. SAC” by the council may have been precipitated by two actions taken by the school’s governing board on Feb. 11.

First, the board passed a resolution saying the college does not have to abide by City of Walnut zoning laws because the parking structure will be an educational facility owned and operated by the district.

And second, the college board approved an \$8.4 million contract with Tilden-Coil Constructors, Inc. for work on the first phase of the new parking structure, including relocation of utility lines, demolition, grading and soil movement.

The college, located in Walnut, has put up numerous new buildings that didn’t require approval from the city. Colleges and university projects are approved by the state architect. Also, the college’s resolution notes it doesn’t have to meet Walnut zoning codes because they do not address the location of schools.

If the facility is not considered educational, it is possible a city would have a say, but the resolution states the parking structure will also be used “for student instruction in subjects such as astronomy, administration of justice and fire technology.”

The City Council voted in August to oppose building a parking structure at the location, finding it would cause air pollution, traffic and potential ingress and egress problems for emergency vehicles, as cars would be using Mountaineer Road to access the structure — the same street used by hundreds of residents of Timberline, a neighborhood in north Walnut.

Mt. SAC plans on building the 2,200-space structure on the site of an existing surface parking lot between Edinger Way and La Puente Drive.

When the city asked for it to be placed elsewhere on the 420-acre campus, Mt. SAC President Bill Scroggins said it would cost the college an additional \$14.5 million. Restarting plans would delay the project for three years, he told the council in January.

The City Council has been aware of the project since 2005 and did not object until recently, according to the lengthy resolution.

Council members were miffed when the trustees would not meet with them and took the extraordinary step of adjourning its meeting from City Hall and resuming it inside Mt. SAC's Founders Hall during a trustees board meeting in November.

After an invitation was extended to trustees to attend a study session, none of the seven board members attended. "Our City Council went to their meeting, and we invited them to join us in a study session, but they did not show up," said Councilwoman Mary Su. "They are rude and arrogant."

Work on the parking structure could begin as early as June. Money for the project comes from Measure RR, a \$353 million facilities bond measure approved by voters in 2008.