

Townhouses, shopping center win city approval

By DAN FITCH

STAFF WRITER

Two developers received the approval of the Watsonville City Council last night in decisions that will further plans for an 86-unit townhouse subdivision and a six-acre shopping center, both to be on South Green Valley Road.

The San Mateo developing firm of O'Brien and Hicks received approval for its tentative map of Green Valley Townhomes, a subdivision that would consist of 28 two-bedroom units and 58 three-bedroom units located at Pennsylvania Drive and Green Valley.

Los Gatos developer Jay Paul received rezoning approval for Pajaro Hills Commercial Center, a six-acre shopping center at the intersection of Green Valley and Main Street.

The O'Brien and Hicks proposal was approved by a unanimous vote, although council members, Police Chief Ray Belgard and City Manager John Radin did wrangle over the possibility of a new traffic light in the subdivision area.

Belgard said he thought a new light on Pennsylvania Drive would be needed to control increased traffic in the area, but the idea irritated Radin and Councilman Rex Clark.

Radin said he previously had met with members of city staff, including engineers, regarding a traffic study of the area, and they concluded a light would not be necessary.

"To bring it up at this time, off the wall, is not fair to the developer or anyone else," Radin said. "Everything (pertaining to traffic) was reviewed at one time and everyone had their chance to speak. Why pay engineers if we're not going to listen to them?"

Clark said he was "really irked" that Belgard would bring up the issue "out of left field" and was "peevish and, frankly, angry" at him for mentioning it at the meeting.

Other council members did not share Clark's opinion, however.

Councilman Vido Deretich said a light could be needed in the future and proposed an amendment stating that developers would shoulder part of the cost of a new light.

"This is no toy project, it's 86 units," Deretich said. "It's going to develop a lot of cars."

The motion was defeated by one vote.

The council then approved the tentative plan. O'Brien and Hicks will now go before the Design Review Commission. If the commission approves the design, the developers will then seek a building permit and final approval of the council.

The council unanimously approved the environmental impact report for the Pajaro Hills Center and then addressed Paul's request to rezone the proposed center for increased commercial usage.

The increase would allow for a wider range of uses, such as a

service station, a hardware store, a toy store or other retail business.

Previously, Paul had met with resistance to the project from residents of the nearby Apple Hills condominiums. Homeowners said the center could adversely affect their neighborhood in terms of increased noise and truck traffic on the streets.

James Proost, president of the Apple Hills Homeowners Association, said last night that residents had met with Paul on several occasions to iron out problems.

"Jay Paul was willing to see our side of the story," Proost said. "He has our support at this point in time and we support his proposal."

Paul said he would plant bigger trees to screen the center from the neighborhood, enclose trash receptacles, and place air conditioners underneath buildings to insulate the neighborhood from excess noise. He also said refinements could be made in the center's service entrance on Green Meadow Drive that would make it difficult for large trucks to pass easily through the neighborhood should they miss the service entrance.

Green Meadow Drive is one of two entrances to the Apple Hill condominiums.

Council approved the proposal by a 5-1 vote (Councilwoman Gwen Carrol did not attend the meeting), with Mayor Betty Murphy dissenting.

Murphy said she thought the center would pull more business from the downtown area.

"We don't need more commercial uses on the fringes of town," she said. "I think this project will take its effect on downtown."

In other development-related business, the council approved the sale of the corner lot at West Beach Street and Harvest Drive, and an adjacent lot, to Granite Construction for \$210,000.

The council also bumped to its next meeting (for the third time) a proposal by developers seeking a tentative map for a 26-unit subdivision on Brewington Avenue.

Developers of the proposed Brewington Terrace won approval in September from the council for subdivision plans, but a condition of approval was that the company would construct a landscaped buffer separating the street and neighboring agricultural land.

Brewington Associates first contended that such a buffer would alter Brewington Avenue, but now representatives from the neighboring Grimmer Ranch said they will donate enough land to allow the street to remain straight even with a 15-foot-wide buffer.

Brewington Associates plans to bring a new map, reflecting the buffer and a straight Brewington Avenue, to the Dec. 8 council meeting for approval.