

City Now Owns DeLaveaga Park All By Itself

The county yesterday gave up its ownership rights to DeLaveaga park to the city of Santa Cruz.

Unanimously, the county board of supervisors voted to sign the agreement that deeds their half-interest in the 574-acre facility to the city. Supervisor Russ McCallie moved the action and was seconded by Supervisor Francis Silliman.

All that remains is for the city to sign the agreement. Since the legal deed was hashed out over several months in meetings between city and county bodies, this is considered a formality.

The county action ends an impasse over development of the park that has existed for decades. A city master plan for the area now may go into action, and application for federal and state funds will be made.

Both the city and the county were given equal ownership rights by a court decision in the early 1900s that grew out of a contest over the will of Jose Vincente deLaveaga, who died in 1894. He had intended that an orphanage or home for the blind be built in the park, but the will was broken by his heirs.

The original intention of deLaveaga was pointed out by Mrs. LaSalle Bachelder, who was one of two objectors at yesterday's public hearing on the park transfer. The other was Alice Wilder, who agreed with Mrs. Bachelder that a long-term lease would be preferable to an outright land transfer.

Supervisor Robert Burton declared, however, that "this transfer is long overdue, and will assure the people of the community a fine park and a fine development."

Chairman Tom Black added that a lease would not solve the recurrent problems that joint ownership brings. "At the end of 50 years or 99 years, we would be right back where we are now, with the county not trusting the city. And all that would have happened is that the weeds would be 50 years older."

James Hammond, chairman of the county parks and recreation commission and a major mover in the land transfer, reminded board members that the city had offered to deed its interest to

the county, if the county would take responsibility for development. This, and a third possibility that both city and county could operate the park jointly was considered carefully during city-county meetings in the past six months, and rejected as too expensive and complicated, he said.

Under the agreement, the city must develop the park "as quickly as possible," must keep 100 acres in wilderness area, and preserve the George Washington memorial grove.

City and county users must be treated equally.

The city took over actual management of the park some years ago, with the tacit approval of the county. City recreation commissioners have proposed a master plan for park development that includes a golf course, new softball park, picnic grounds, tennis courts, and other improvements.

City officials say they need full ownership to apply for federal and state development funds to implement the master plan.

Mrs. Wilder told supervisors that the city has not always acted wisely in development of the park, however. She cited the gift of land for the National Guard as an example.

Assistant county counsel Jerry Bartholow admitted that the National Guard does own part of the park, and could sell it legally. He added, however, that city officials already are discussing re-purchase of the land from the National Guard.

City officials at yesterday's meeting had little comment until supervisors had acted. Then, Mayor Eugene Fleming told the board the action was appreciated. "We may be classed as burdened now with a project. But I assure you it will be developed for the county as well as city residents."

Fleming added that "we would like to have supervisors on our side when we apply for development funds."

Supervisor Vincent Locatelli grinned widely and announced that the county counsel had told him that the board action means DeLaveaga park now can go back on the tax rolls, except for the 100-acre wilderness area.

The comment provoked some apparently friendly, but nervous, laughter from city officials.