

Board orders speedup on Wingspread

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By BUD O'BRIEN

Santa Cruz County supervisors refused Tuesday to make any sort of commitment on the proposed Wingspread Beach project, but did agree to speed up the process toward a final decision on the project to the extent legally possible.

Pressure has been growing on the county governing board both from the developer and the public to come to some decision on the controversial proposal to build a complex on the Porter Sesnon property that would include performing arts and playing field facilities for the general public.

That proposal, which has

been in the works in one form or another since 1979, has aroused both strong support and ardent opposition. Supporters include those who believe the county needs the performing arts and recreational facilities that would be provided and the jobs and tax revenues that would accrue. Opponents say the land ought to be used for park purposes and that the Wingspread development would result in a crushing impact on environment.

The dispute more or less came to a head when the developer, the Palo Alto firm of Hare, Brewer and Kelley, said that a recently-imposed

requirement for another environmental impact report (EIR) on the project would make it financially unfeasible without some sort of signal from the supervisors that they supported the project.

Unwilling to make any such commitment at this stage, the board majority did agree this morning to hurry the process even faster than was being recommended by the planning director. Board Chairman Robley Levy, who represents the area involved (and is in the midst of a tough re-election campaign) urged the board to set up a timetable that would assure that the new EIR could

be completed by Jan. 31.

Planning Director Kris Schenk, however, presented the board with a schedule this morning for processing that would not see the EIR ready for submission for hearings until next May.

Richard Allen, attorney for Hare, Brewer and Kelley, told the board such a long schedule would probably make the project's feasibility doubtful.

Allen obviously would have liked to see the board adopt the motion of Watsonville Supervisor E. Wayne Moore Jr. Moore, decrying the years of delay in the proposal, asked his colleagues to promise to "do

everything possible to approve this project" provided it met all the legal and environmental requirements.

Although Moore's fellow conservative on the board, Soquel-Live Oak Supervisor Dan Forbus, seconded that motion, he indicated he wasn't enthusiastic about it. Forbus said what really concerned him, "and not just about Wingspread, but a lot of other projects," was the fact that they tended to get hung up in the planning process "and never see the light of day."

Forbus said a certain date ought to be set at which such projects are to be heard by the

Planning Commission, and that those hearings be held even if the planning staff says a particular project isn't ready for hearing.

"Let the Planning Commission decide that," he said.

Santa Cruz Supervisor Gary Patton, while blaming most of the delay on the developer and not the county, nevertheless said he was willing to support Supervisor Levy's efforts to speed up the process.

Moore, realizing there was no support for his efforts to "send a signal" of support to the developer (County Counsel Dwight Herr indicated

Continued on page 7

Green Sheet, Wednesday, October 17, 1984 — 7

Wingspread

Continued from page 1

approval of such a commitment would be unwise) said he would support the effort to speed up the process.

"Half a loaf is better than none," Moore said.

Attorney Allen indicated that if a schedule approximating that suggested by Levy was to be adopted, the developer would probably proceed with the new EIR and the possibility of the Wingspread development would

remain alive.

In the end the board agreed unanimously to have the planning department adopt a timetable as short as could be done within the law, and to return to the board next week for final action.

No action was taken Tuesday on other suggestions by Levy, including that a special task force be set up to shepherd the Wingspread proposal through the rest of the process.

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