

# One small step to peace

## Rivals over Wingspread try to find their common ground

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The following dialogue was arranged by The Sentinel and was not a public event.

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**T**HEIR POSITIONS on the Wingspread performing arts-condominium project are far apart, like the tips of an eagle's wings in flight.

But anti-Wingspreader Vickie Powell-Murray and Rowland Rebele, proponent of the Aptos project, exchanged their swords for olive branches Monday for an experiment in peace making.

Powell-Murray and Rebele agreed to attempt to discover some common ground on the Wingspread issue, in recognition of Peace Day, Sunday.

The theme for the second annual Peace Day is "Discovering Our Common Ground." Organizers propose that if people of differing opinions can come together to discover points of agreement, that's one small, but significant, step toward global peace.

A bit of background: Developer Ryland Kelley hopes to build on the Porter-Sesnon property, a 66-acre coastsite across Highway 1 from Cabrillo College. Kelley has a 99-year lease on the land owned by the University of California.

County supervisors have conceptually approved a 472-unit condominium-conference center, three-hall performing arts complex and several athletic fields. The approval hinges on Kelley meeting some stringent requirements.

Supervisors also want to negotiate a deal with Kelley under which the county would purchase the lease. Then the county would lease the property back to the developer, who would operate the project and pay fees to the county — money that could be used for improvements in the unincorporated area.

Powell-Murray represents Friends of Porter-Sesnon, a coun-



Vickie Powell-Murray and Rowland Rebele at opposite sides of development issue.

tywide group started by neighbors of the Porter-Sesnon site. This group argues that the environment would be seriously damaged by the proposed development. Ironically, Powell-Murray once worked for Kelley.

Rebele is co-owner of eight community papers in Southern California. His support of the Wingspread development stems from his four years as president of the Santa Cruz Symphony. He also is treasurer of the Wingspread Arts

Foundation, a non-profit group that would like to take title to and administer Wingspread's performing arts buildings.

When Powell-Murray and Rebele came face to face Monday, they came as individuals, not as representatives of their prospective groups. Their agreements were not binding.

Referees were Ann Lober and Peg Williams, attorneys and professional mediators from Soquel. They ran the dialogue as they would a formal mediation session.

It started on a positive note, with both sides agreeing that Powell-Murray would introduce herself first.

"That's probably the last thing we'll agree on," Powell-Murray stated with a laugh.

Powell-Murray and Rebele then listed the issues involved in the dispute. Powell-Murray cited traffic generation, urbanization of a neighborhood, community opposition, \$4 million in state funds waiting in escrow, protection of the coast, and performing arts buildings being used

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by Kelley as "the carrot" to get his condominium development approved.

Rebele's turn: the need for performing arts facilities, the difficulty of financing these facilities, the need for funds to maintain the unincorporated area, and proper development of the urbanized areas of the county.

Is there any issue on this lists that you can agree on?, asked Williams.

"My gut reaction ... would be to discuss if this piece of property is the appropriate place for this development ... No one on our side disagrees with the fact that there are more facilities needed in the community for various arts groups. But the biggest disagreement is that we feel this development is inappropriate for this piece of land, whereas his folks feel it's the most appropriate place," said Powell-Murray.

Was that a note of accord? "Can we say we have agreement on one issue, that there is a need for a cultural facility of some kind?" asked Williams, hopefully.

"No," stated Powell-Murray. "I feel there is a need for more facilities in the community, however there are already existing facilities that could be renovated and other facilities throughout the county, specifically, the Civic Auditorium."

"I sense agreement on the issue that says Santa Cruz performers

need a place to perform — a good quality place, without any restrictions on whether that place exists or not," noted Williams, optimistically.

Accord reached. Peace in the making. Gorbachev and Reagan, take note. Both Powell-Murray and Rebele agreed that Santa Cruz performers need suitable places to perform. But they didn't quit there. The foes also agreed these facilities aren't presently available.

This wasn't the end of the road. Next step in the peace-making journey was to come up with ways to reach the agreed-upon goals.

Powell-Murray voiced "her fantasy." She dreams of both groups getting together, taking all the energy they use against each other and putting it toward something positive, coming up a solution that would make both sides happy.

"What would make their side happy is if they had this performing arts center that they badly need ... We agree that they need it, but not on that piece of property.

"If we could find someplace else that would be suitable, that the county would get use 100 percent of the time, have 100 percent of the control and the developer was out of the picture, I think that would resolve the whole problem," said Powell-Murray.

Rebele said he could agree with this goal, this fantasy, "so long as we take into account that we not only

need to build the facilities, but we need to support them on an annual basis."

The two agreed to the following objectives: to build facilities, to provide ongoing support for those facilities and to find the proper location.

But all this agreement didn't mean Rebele was backing down on his support of the Wingspread proposal, including the condominiums.

"Obviously, if the facility incorporated condominiums — such as the present the Wingspread proposal does — where there would be revenues for the county from room tax, food tax and property tax — then it could satisfy needs for funds in unincorporated areas," he stated.

Powell-Murray countered, "I take issue with that. Rowland has agreed to this in concept. What I hear him saying is he wants a performing arts center, but now he wants to address the problems of tax revenues for the community. Those are two separate issues all together. This development or any development cannot ever address a tax-base revenue for the community."

Without "the carrot" of the performing arts complex, Kelley would have no support because few would back condos on the coast, she added.

But Rebele argued in favor of condos proposed for Wingspread. "It's clear to me from the two environmental impact reports that the condo development doesn't involve environmental impacts that can't be

easily mitigated ... There's a barrier for saying condos alone make some sense, even without the performing arts facility ...

"Vickie is quiet right. The reason I'm involved in the project is because of the arts. The arts got me into the project. But then before I continued with it, I made my mind up that the whole project made sense, both from the concept of condominiums on the coast and from the concept of performing arts."

Realizing there was little common ground on the Wingspread development, Lober asked: If no such thing as Wingspread existed, how would you go about getting performing arts space?

Again, there was agreement. Powell-Murray and Rebele suggested renovating the Civic Auditorium, tapping local wealthy donors for funds to build a facility, proposing to owners of Chaminade-Whitney Conference Center that they build a performing arts facility, providing a 1,000-seat facility at UCSC by perhaps renovating the field house, using the Fox Theatre in Watsonville.

While this was simply a non-binding exercise in finding common ground, Powell-Murray and Rebele left the dialogue, together, talking, with more positive feelings.

They were excited over the possibility of getting their two groups together for a real mediation session. They realized that, while it might be just a handful of sand, they do have some common ground.