

Density curbs put crimp in Rispin developer's plans

A single vote Thursday night may spell life or death for the venerable old Rispin Mansion in Capitola.

Howard Dysle, who wants to turn the old mansion into the focal point for an 85 unit senior citizens complex, believes that Mayor Ron Graves has the key vote that will determine the viability of his proposal and perhaps — ultimately — the fate of the heavily vandalized, decayed mansion.

In a study session last Wednesday night marked by Graves' absence, the other four councilmen appeared to settle on a density of 7 units an acre — or a maximum of approximately 45 units on the 6½ acre site.

The councilmen argued widely differing viewpoints. Michael Routh and Bob Bucher argued against setting a density on the land until Dysle or another developer presents a project.

Councilman Dennis Beltram has been arguing for very low density on the creekside property, generally less than five units an acre. And Jerry Clarke indicated he would support something in the range of five to seven units per acre for seniors — less for a conventional development.

The compromise, according to City Manager Steve Burrell, was

seven units and that limit will be in the resolutions submitted to the City Council Thursday night.

If the council adopts that resolution, Dysle contends that his project will be economically unfeasible, leaving the Friends of the Rispin Estate's plans to raise enough money to buy and restore the mansion as a community center as perhaps the last hope of survival.

Dysle is hoping that Graves, who sent a letter to the other councilmen last Wednesday night, can be persuaded to accept a 10 unit per acre limit on the property.

That would give Dysle a maximum of 65 units on the site, still short of what he has said is the 85 needed to make a senior residential complex with a restored mansion a financial success.

"Even at 65 units," Dysle said after the meeting last week, "I don't think I can do it (mansion restoration and senior complex)."

"I will give it a country try," Dysle added, "but my gut feeling tells me I can't."

Dysle said the project would be viable at 65 units "if I didn't have to restore the mansion and set all that land aside."

Dysle has an option to

purchase the mansion and the surrounding 6½ acres for \$950,000 and has said it will cost another \$1 million to restore the mansion to the condition it was in when completed by Henry Rispin in the early 1920s.

Dysle is pinning his hopes at the present time on the lobbying abilities of Bucher and Routh, along with a statement in the letter Graves sent to the other councilmen last week, saying that with the present proposal he would support the Planning Commission recommendation of 5-10 units per acre, with 10 units reserved for a senior citizens development.

A less likely possibility, he said, would be convincing Jerry Clarke to change his viewpoint.

"Maybe if they realize that they are putting all their marbles in one sack, maybe they will change their minds,"

Dysle said, referring to the Friends' hope to raise enough money to buy and restore the property.

The Friends have received a favorable reception from state Coastal Conservancy officials who, according to Friends spokesman Dr. Barry Staley, say the group may be able to get a \$200,000 grant from the state agency.

In his letter, Graves said he believes that mansion preservation should be the foremost concern of the council. Options, in his viewpoint, include purchase of the property by someone who would then donate it to city who would, in turn, have to find the money to rebuild the mansion. An alternative would be to find a group or individual willing to buy and restore the property and then give it to the city.

If a development is approved for the prop-

erty, Graves said, then restoration of the mansion and grounds is a must

Any development should not put the mansion in a supporting role, nor exceed the mansion height.

Graves also said that

the new buildings should not be sited so as to destroy growth adjacent to the creek bed or on steep slopes, that the entire site should be developed at one time.

Property development should be tied to a condition, Graves wrote,

requiring the mansion and grounds to be open to the public, and that a scenic easement at least 50 feet back from the creek edge be obtained by the city to protect the riparian corridor.

The worst option is

the "do nothing approach," Graves said. That means no project and no restoration. "This is the worst possible approach as the mansion may be lost for all times to vandals and/or fire," Graves said.

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