

Santa Cruz greenbelt study panel ballooning

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9-2-93

SANTA CRUZ — The City Council has expanded a proposed greenbelt committee from three elected officials to 19 community members, but the original three would be the only ones allowed to vote.

"We wanted the input, but the real decisions here rest with the council," said Councilman Louis Rittenhouse.

This afternoon the City Council will consider a proposal to form a community-based group that would figure out how to protect 400 acres of privately owned open

space edging the city from widespread development.

"The issue is how are you going to pay for it, and what are you going to do with it once you've got it," explained Rittenhouse, who serves on the City Council Greenbelt Subcommittee, along with Vice Mayor Scott Kennedy and Councilwoman Katherine Beiers.

Last week, the three elected officials held a public hearing to find out how community members would like the greenbelt planning process to work.

After the hearing, they decided the

group should include several neighborhood group representatives, members of selected environmental groups such as the Citizen's Committee for the Greenbelt and the Sierra Club, owners of the private lands which make up the greenbelt, a sports fields advocate, and other residents.

Today the City Council is scheduled to vote on a greenbelt planning process which would set the following actions into motion:

- This month a 19-member Greenbelt Committee would be formed, with Kennedy, Beiers and Rittenhouse as the only vot-

ing members.

- By March 18, the Planning Commission would make recommendations on rezoning the greenbelt lands.

- In April and May, consultants would be hired to conduct a community survey, conduct workshops, study potential environmental impacts on the properties, identify funding alternatives for purchasing the properties and appraise the land.

- Between July and next January, public hearings would be held to choose the method to purchase or otherwise protect the lands.

- Between February and May 1994, a

draft Greenbelt Master Plan and a draft Environmental Impact Report would be publicly reviewed.

- By June or July 1994, the Greenbelt Master Plan and Environmental Impact Report would be adopted.

Although exact costs haven't been figured out yet, city staff estimate it will cost \$100,000 to \$300,000 for consultants and staff to appraise the properties, negotiate with owners and find funding sources.

The City Council is scheduled to discuss the Greenbelt planning process at its afternoon session beginning at 3:30 p.m. today.