

Wingspread Backers Plea Case Before Board

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Supporters of Wingspread, a plan to build a performing arts center and tourist lodging complex on the Porter-Sesnon property in mid-county, met in the final public hearing Tuesday.

During the Board of Supervisors' last public hearing on this county's local coastal land use plan, a number of people spoke in favor of broadening the plan to allow for a development such as Wingspread adjacent to New Brighton State Beach.

This time around, no one spoke in opposition, a reversal of earlier meetings where the weight of testimony has been against the project.

The tentatively approved plan restricts development on the 67-acre Porter-Sesnon property to a maximum 130 campsites and urges the state to purchase the property for a state park. Park officials say they will have funds in two years to make the purchase.

The property is owned by the University of California and leased to Hare, Brewer and Kelley which under the name Conference Associates has proposed Wingspread.

Ryland Kelley, a principal in Conference Associates, told the board, "This land is truly a magnificent resource and it can answer some great needs of the county.

"The LCP should insure it is fully utilized for

the benefit of the county (but) a state park seems basically to benefit people outside the county," Kelley said.

The need for a performing arts center here was reinforced with testimony from a half dozen or more people, including Jonathan Boutelle for the building trades, Ernest Kretschmer on behalf of the Cabrillo Music Festival and Gary Reese for the Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce.

Supervisors took no action on the plan and are expected next week to make decisions in order to get the LCP to the state commission during its Oct. 4-6 meetings. It had been tentatively scheduled to be heard by the state in early September, but the county failed to meet that deadline.

A number of Bonny Doon residents said they were very concerned that the plan includes a

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restriction against putting septic tanks on undeveloped parcels that are less than 2.5 acres.

Property owners and real estate agents are telling the board that such a restriction would be tantamount to confiscating the smaller parcels in the county.

Supervisors indicated they may add a grandfather clause to the LCP to allow existing parcels of less than 2.5 acres to develop, leaving the restriction on future land divisions.

A couple of land owners, including Charles Keenan of the large Grey Whale Ranch in Bonny Doon, said their properties are not viable agricultural lands even for cattle grazing, and that the plan should allow some residential development for them.

On the issue of the Dennis property which includes 16 acres along Rio Del Mar Boulevard just south of Deer Park, neighbors to the property made it clear they do not want a neighborhood park located in the proposed residential portion of the parcel.

In a petition signed by 103 residents, the Aptos Beach Pines Home Owners Association asked the board to continue designating the property urban low density and to move the proposed park to the northern part where it will form a natural buffer.

The slopes in that area are steeper than the board majority wanted when it mandated the park be on a more level part of the property.

State coastal staff has insisted the property be given a higher density as it is one of the few remaining open areas near the coast. That recommendation is being resisted by the county.

At this point, the county board is determining if it will make any changes on the land use plan to conform to state coastal staff recommendations. Along with increased density for the Dennis property, the state staff says the Punta La Selva property, 11 acres near Manresa Beach, be given a higher density use.

On Porter-Sesnon, the state staff and it appears the commission agree it should be restricted to 130 campsites and turned into a state park.

Supervisors can decide to stick to their decision on the Dennis property and to keep Punta La Selva in the low rural designation if the board chooses.

It would mean the land use plan of the LCP would go to the state commission with a disagreement between the county and state coastal staff.

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