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Park board seeks funding to buy SP land

By LANE WALLACE APR 1 1993
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Two La Selva Recreation District directors headed to San Francisco this morning for negotiations with Southern Pacific after getting a vote of confidence from the community last night on their efforts to buy bluff property from the railroad.

"We're trying to find a deal we can all live with," said board member Jim Van Houten, who has been leading the effort to buy the

3.5-acre site at the end of Playa Boulevard.

Van Houten made the comment at a special board meeting which drew 17 people, about 14 more than normal attendance. The people assured the board members they're for the purchase, as long as an acceptable deal can be worked out.

The Recreation District wants to buy the land so it can stabilize the bluff, where erosion has been worsening. If left under SP ownership,

there's concern that "they (the railroad) will do nothing," said board member Dave Boone, who went to San Francisco with Van Houten and attorney Gerald Bowden.

Southern Pacific has owned the property for years, and had not objected to the site being used as an unofficial open-space park. But several years ago, SP officials began talking about residential development on the site.

That raised the ire of several

residents, who were eventually assured by county officials that the property didn't meet zoning and land use laws for residential development.

SP acknowledged the county's position, and lowered the price to \$50,000.

"They're selling it to us at a discount," Boone said.

Discount or not, the low-budget district doesn't have the money. District directors have been work-

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ing with the state Coastal Conservancy, which makes grants for such land purchases.

Laurence Frommhagen, a La Selva Beach property owner who has closely followed the SP negotiations, said last night the Coastal Conservancy's executive director told him the agency doesn't have any money now for the purchase.

There is some money available from a state Coastal Commission fund, Frommhagen said, but approval would take several months and the approval of the state Legislature and the governor.

Van Houten said he believes financing can be secured through the Coastal Conservancy, but if it isn't, there may be other sources available. One woman at the meeting last night suggested residents who live near the bluff pool their resources to buy the land.

Frommhagen raised a number of questions about SP's proposed conditions for the sale and has written a number of letters to the agencies involved.

SP is asking the district to build and maintain a fence on the property. Frommhagen said the fence should only be at the bottom of the bluffs, and that no "iron curtain" be installed along the entire property line.

Van Houten said the fencing requirement is vague and will need clarification.

The purchase will be discussed again at the board's regular meeting April 14.