

Chamber not taking sides on Wingspread proposal

By CANDACE ATKINS
Tim Welch, spokesman for the proposed Wingspread cultural-residential complex in Aptos, had few hard answers for the many questions put to him by Capitola Chamber of Commerce directors at their meeting Thursday morning.

the freeway from Cabrillo College.

In spite of his assurances of partial low income apartment residences, Welch could offer no figures on the price of the 200 proposed condominiums, other than to say they "may be \$100,000 to \$400,000."

"The prices haven't been set yet," he added. "The prices I gave are just a guess — I don't really know."

He also didn't know much about traffic impact, telling directors, "We don't know those figures yet." He said a traffic study is underway. "We think traffic

impact here will be manageable," he said. "...Our major concern is traffic — we want to be able to look people in the eye."

When questioned about energy usage, Welch answered, "Soquel Water district says this (proposal) is well within their capacity to serve." He had no comment on other utilities.

Occupancy is estimated at 50-percent he said, with the low income apartments being the only year-round units.

Chamber director Gordon Pedersen, a Certified Public Accountant, repeatedly questioned Welch about the economic

feasibility of Wingspread, particularly since the majority of the units are hotel-type.

"Who would be able to pay interest — 13, 14, 18 or 20-percent, on a \$400,000 unit?" questioned Pedersen. "It would be \$65,000 alone in interest, a year, and at 50-percent occupancy, rent would only cover about \$15,000."

(Welch said condominiums may rent for \$100-\$125 per night, but for

now "there are no set figures.")

"I guess your figures are right — I haven't figured it out yet — they could be (right). But these are not beachfront units, I don't think they will be that high," answered Welch.

Welch told directors that Wingspread is a "fair comparison" to Asilomar, and is "a clean proposal — it's environmentally clean."

He told directors, "The architects have done a pretty good job holding the space open." Lodgings and other "man made creations" will account for only 17-percent of the 66 acre parcel, if the project is approved as proposed, he said.

Santa Cruz County will benefit from Wingspread, he said, with a two-percent increase to the tax base, plus \$1 million income each year to the

county treasury from a transient occupancy tax charged to lodgers.

The theaters will be supported by income from the lodging, he said, and Wingspread will be able to offer recreational "packages to the nine Bay Area Counties" that will provide "debt free performing arts facilities."

In addition, local groups will have more opportunity to perform in

the three small theaters in the "Theater District," and national groups will be attracted to the well-appointed performing arts center.

Welch said public hearings should begin in May, following a public comment period.

"We aren't here to take up sides," said Chamber president Les Anderson. "This is a very important decision, and we will need a lot of information."

REFERENCE

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