

Wingspread clears major block

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SANTA CRUZ — The Board of Supervisors reversed field Tuesday and dropped one of its major conditions for approval of the controversial Wingspread Beach project in Aptos.

The board voted 3-2 to drop its insistence on a direct link between the proposed condominium/conference center-performing arts complex and the adjacent Highway 1 freeway.

The board also voted to modify another condition calling for construction of an additional, fourth ath-

letics field on the Wingspread site, which is comprised of the 66-acre Porter-Sesnon property and an adjoining six-acre parcel.

Instead of requiring Wingspread developer Ryland Kelley to install a fourth field on the six-acre parcel, the board voted to require him to pay for construction of a new field elsewhere in midcounty.

The board's action Tuesday appeared to eliminate Planning Director Kris Schenk's chief rationales for further, extensive environmental review of the 6-year-old Wingspread project, which has already been the subject of two environmental impact reports.

The freeway-access and playing field requirements were among 17 conditions imposed on the Wingspread project when the board approved it "in concept" 11 months ago.

Kelley complied with virtually all of the conditions, including a requirement that the project's condominium units be reduced by 20 percent, from 590 to 468.

But he asked to be released from the freeway-access requirement.

In a report to supervisors last week, Schenk indicated that if the board continued to insist on the

freeway link and the additional athletics field, the county would almost certainly be required to conduct another time-consuming environmental review of the proposed development.

Schenk indicated that if the additional environmental study, and a new traffic analysis — both of which he strongly urged on the board — were required, a final decision on Wingspread would be at least another year away.

Tuesday's board vote put county Environmental Coordinator Susan Williamson on a political hotseat. It's

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Williamson who must now determine whether the much-studied development proposal, shorn though it is of the freeway-link and playing field requirements, should be subjected to still more lengthy traffic and environmental studies.

She was directed by a board majority composed of Chairman Robley Levy, Live Oak Supervisor Dan Forbus and south-county supervisor Sherry Mehl to make that determination "as soon as possible."

The board's action was bitterly opposed by Third District Supervisor Gary Patton and Fifth District Supervisor Joe Cucchiara.

The move to eliminate the freeway access and playing field conditions was spearheaded by Levy, who imposed the requirements on the project when she cast the decisive, swing vote for conceptual approval last March.

Levy said that, as a "lay person," she would prefer to see a freeway connection at Porter-Sesnon. But she said she had decided to drop her insistence on the link because Caltrans officials had indicated that the state would not go along with the idea, and because the planning staff had reported that freeway access might not be possible in the face of state opposition.

"We've got to impose reasonable and feasible conditions," she said, "and it's the testimony of Caltrans and our staff that these (freeway-access) proposals are not that."

Levy said she was "eager to assure" that the Wingspread project netted the county four athletics fields. But, she said, in view of problems associated with adding the fourth field to the development site, requiring Kelley to finance construction of a field elsewhere "might very well be a more desirable

alternative."

Levy's actions prompted Wingspread opponent Vickie Powell-Murray to call the Aptos supervisor a "woman of the night."

"I think she's totally out of control," said Powell-Murray, spokeswoman for Friends of Porter-Sesnon, a citizens group which has led the drive against Wingspread.

"What we're dealing with is a woman of the night. We've established what her profession is; it's the price that's not established.

"We (said) over a year ago when she put these conditions on the project that she would lift them," Powell-Murray said, "and that's what we've seen here today."

Vowing that a 1988 ballot initiative would give voters the last say on Wingspread — "whatever happens to the project" — Powell-Murray declared, "We will not stand for this."

As expected, Supervisor Mehl followed the lead of her predecessor, former Supervisor E. Wayne Moore Jr., in siding with Levy and Forbus on Wingspread Tuesday. But she exacted a price for her cooperation.

Mehl insisted that at least half of the county's "non-tax" revenues from Wingspread should be shared equally among all five supervisorial districts. Last March, the board majority decreed that all of those revenues, which are expected to flow from the development's hotel and restaurant operations, should be spent in the county's "urban service" areas. The restriction excluded the rural Fourth District.

Accepting Mehl's terms, Levy said she wouldn't "tangle with the logic that there should be equity among districts."