

# Capitola moves ahead on fake-seaweed plan

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CAPITOLA — A plan to install artificial seaweed in an attempt to stop cliff erosion in the Depot Hill area has become the city's own "\$164,000 question."

The City Council Thursday night approved the experimental plan, despite Councilman Dennis Beltram describing it as "the \$164,000 gamble."

The installation of the artificial seaweed is estimated to cost \$164,000. The council's approval so far, however, is for only \$15,100 — the cost of an engineering study which would determine whether the plan is feasible for the waters below Grand Avenue.

"I view it as a \$164,000 gamble," Beltram told The Sentinel afterward. "If it works, great, but I just question the whole concept and whether we're throwing our money away."

He noted that city staff already has conceded the artificial seaweed was an experiment. "They've even said that the first big storm could wash it away," he added.

The 19 property owners along Grand Avenue, however, who will be asked to pay half the costs of the seaweed, are in favor of the experiment.

Assistant Planner Sue Tupper said a meeting with residents earlier in the week drew a "very favorable response."

Mayor Ron Graves noted that residents were told "it was a gamble that may not work."

"The feeling I got," he added, "was that they wanted to try something."

The cost factor of the artificial seaweed may be a determining factor. While \$164,000 is nothing to sneeze at, a more

traditional rock seawall is estimated to cost about \$2 million.

Under the proposal, seven rows of the pseudo-seaweed — each row being 1,000 feet long — would be installed.

The seaweed, called "Seascape," is manufactured by the DuPont Co. It successfully has been used in both Cape Hatteras, N.C., and along the Great Lakes. The only installation on the West Coast occurred in Long Beach recently. It is too early to tell if it is working there.

The concept is simple. "Seascape" is actually just a series of gray, synthetic streamers attached to fabric sacks. The streamers should trap sand that normally flows out to sea, dropping it to the ocean floor.