

All eyes on Porter-Sesnon

Having waded through one two-hour public hearing Monday night on Bay Avenue street improvements, Capitola city council members were faced with two more hearings on major issues which they chose to open, discuss briefly and then continue until Oct. 11.

Both matters, the environmental impact report on a General Plan amendment which foresees the annexation of the Porter-Sesnon property and adjacent land into the city, and the condominium conversion ordinance, have been in the works for several months, have passed through the planning commission hearings and are now before the council.

The city's EIR consultant, Geary T. Coats, reviewed the scope of the EIR for the councilmen, saying he had based his impact and mitigation assessments on "the most intensive use of the area." The areas include the Pine Tree Lane and Pot Belly Beach residential areas, Porter-Sesnon, the Amtron property fronting on McGregor Road and the New Brighton Beach State Park.

The council is taking the action to include these areas into the city's "sphere of influence," a necessary step preparatory to annexation. The General Plan amendment envisions the Pine Tree Lane and Pot Belly areas remaining in their present low-density residential usage, the Amtron property as a "park-like electronics complex that incorporates substantial landscaping," and Porter-Sesnon as a "Midcounty Community Complex." The last designation bothered members of the council and area residents who want Porter-Sesnon to remain as open space. The various gulches in the area would be retained as open space buffers, according to the EIR.

With "most intensive use" as the measure, Coats said development of the property would result in significant adverse impacts, such as increased traffic, which could be mitigated by widening the streets; visual impact on a natural area, mitigated by architectural control; and moderate impact on such things as fire service, change in character of neighborhoods,

surface drainage runoff (an increase of 238 percent), air quality and growth inducement, none of which could really be mitigated. There would be insignificant impact on geology, seers, or vegetation and wildlife and noise pollution, he said. The positive impacts would be an increase of tax revenue and development of cultural and recreational facilities, it was stated.

Planning Director Richard Steele told the councilmen the residents in the Pine Tree Lane area "would like to be left alone," a statement quickly attested to by several

of the residents.

They were particularly bothered by the "Midcounty Community Complex" designation for the Porter-Sesnon property, wanting to be designated for open space only. They cited studies which show an overdraft on the underground water supply in the Soquel Creek County Water District which serves the area, saying development would only compound the problem.

"We love Capitola," one of the residents said, "but we have our own private streets, water supply, we do our own

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street repairs and we pass our own rules. We would like to keep it that way. We don't want to be in Capitola or Aptos. We would like to stay the way we are."

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White warned the council that the electronics industry — one of which is proposed for the Amtron property — uses chemicals in their manufacture which would contaminate the underground water supply and beaches. This was quickly

refuted by the property owner, Bill Madera, who said, "Our operation is assembly only. All manufacturing is done elsewhere. Absolutely no chemicals are used in our operation."

Various councilmen fretted over the Midcounty Community Complex designation for Porter-Sesnon, saying it almost committed the property to intense development. Steele reported that the state had appraised the property this week with an eye toward putting acquisition of it in next year's State Parks and Recreation Department Budget. Upon hearing this, the council voted 4-0 to write the state, urging its acquisition. Councilman Ron Graves dissented, not wanting to commit the city until the city was able to get the property under its control through annexation.

With the hour getting late, the councilmen decided to continue the hearing until Oct.

11, at which time they will consider the acceptance of the EIR.

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The next hearing was on the long-discussed condominium conversion ordinance, which sets the rules under which apartment houses can be converted to condominiums. It is quite restrictive, but not restrictive enough for some councilmen. Graves wanted to include in it a provision that banned any more conversions after this year. As it stands it allows conversions only on those apartments built after 1970. Councilman Jerry Clarke also argued for stricter requirements in the ordinance.

Ed Newman, speaking for the owners of the Las Flores Apartments, the proposed conversion of which spurred the introduction of the ordinance, said it was already "tough in respect to tenants rights, and flexible enough to give you the ability to consider

each case on its own merits." He urged quick acceptance of it.

It was continued until Oct. 11.

In other business, councilmen:

—Set a public hearing on Oct. 25 on an appeal by Harry O'Brien of a planning commission decision denying him a home occupation use permit.

REFERENCE

APTOS BRANCH
LIBRARY

7625 SOQUEL DRIVE
APTOS, CALIFORNIA 95003

See also
Wingspread