

Wingspread plan stalled

By BUD O'BRIEN

While supporters and opponents of the proposed Wingspread Beach development wage a "battle of signatures," the proposal itself remains bogged down in the county planning process.

Opponents of the project, who have been taking something of a breather as the proposal (or proposals) started through the planning process, revived their public activity last week by presenting to the Board of Supervisors what they described as more than 1,000 letters from people opposed to the Wingspread project.

These huge stacks of letters were handed over to supervisors by Vicki Powell, head of an organization called Friends of Porter Sesnon, which is in the vanguard of opposition to any private development of the Porter Sesnon property on the beach and open field across the freeway from Cabrillo College. It's on that 66 acre parcel that the Palo Alto firm of Hare, Brewer and Kelley wants to build the Wingspread Beach complex.

Ms. Powell told the board that the bulk of the signatures on the anti-Wingspread letters were of residents of the Aptos and Midcounty area, and she promised that her organization would be active in the coming months in opposing the plans of Hare, Brewer and Kelley.

As if in response, Wingspread supporters announced this week that they had gathered a "grand total of 3,322 signatures in favor of the Wingspread Beach project." That announcement was made by Tim Welch, manager of Conference Associates, which is the Hare, Brewer and Kelley subsidiary in charge of the Wingspread project.

The support for Wingspread Beach is related only to one of the two alternative proposals that Conference Associates have made. That is the proposal for a 295-unit (or 585 units, depending on one's definition of a unit) condominium-conference center project, which would include the construction of performing arts and recreational facilities for public use.

An alternate proposal, which Conference Asso-

ciates has advanced as a sort of fall-back plan in case the large complex is rejected by the county, calls for the construction of a 198-unit project without the performing arts or recreational facilities.

Conference Associates has enlisted the support of many of those in the county involved in the performing arts and in recreation for the larger complex as a way to get badly needed facilities for those activities.

Welch said that the signatures his organization obtained "were gathered in a variety of ways, including direct mail, shopping center tables, and door-to-door." According to Welch, of the responses received, more than 90 percent were favorable to the Wingspread project with its performing areas and recreation facilities.

"There have been some very vocal and visible people opposed to Wingspread," Welch said, "but I think our results show that this group is definitely in the minority."

Meanwhile, the proposal has encountered a number of questions from county planning staff. Planners say that floor plans reveal that the 295 units could actually become 585 units if all the habitable spaces were to be rented out.

This has led to concern among planners that the traffic problems involved have not been adequately addressed in the existing plans.

Conference Associates doesn't agree with that position, but new traffic studies are being made for the staff's consideration. There are also concerns with public access to the beach and the visual impacts of the project before the environmental review process can be completed.