

Public uses urged for Rispin mansion

By JENNIFER KOSS
STAFF WRITER

Nearly a year after a committee was formed to study it, a report has been issued on the uses to which the city of Capitola might put Rispin Mansion on Wharf Road.

The city purchased the mansion for \$1.35 million in December, 1985.

Once the posh summer home of San Francisco oil millionaire Henry Rispin, the mansion, built in 1923, has deteriorated.

The report proposes several uses for the 9,000 square-foot mansion and 6.5 acres of grounds.

The report reads, in part, "the estate should remain, as much as practicable, accessible to the public and available for free to its owners, the people of Capitola."

Many Capitola residents had urged the city to buy the property to preserve its historical and aesthetic value.

Members of the Rispin Mansion Advisory Committee were historians, educators, artists, architects and businessmen.

City Manager Steve Burrell is recommending that the Capitola City Council conduct a public hearing on the report Feb. 12.

Since the surrounding area is residential, the city should control noise and traffic, the report states. Parking is not recommended on the site, but is suggested at Perry Park, to the north, or on city lots, with access by shuttle bus.

Suggested utilization includes; museum exhibits, references and displays; sculpture on the grounds; an artists-in-residence program; music and drama; seminars and classes;

wedding ceremonies; informal picnics and outdoor teas; and a gift shop, possibly staffed by volunteers, which could offer items relating to Rispin and his estate.

The committee also suggests, "It may be beneficial that some sort of private foundation be established to run the estate and receive private donations and grants."

The city could consider collaborating with an area college to maintain the horticultural resources of the estate, or on cultivating a riparian botanical garden between the estate and Perry Park.

Modern construction materials could be used to restore the mansion to its original appearance, the report states, though certain interior changes might be needed to provide the required safety and access.

Estimates of restoration costs are at least \$1 million.

The committee's report concludes the mansion, linked with Perry Park, would provide the opportunity for Capitola residents, students and visitors "to experience and learn about the arts, the environment and the fascinating history of Henry Rispin and Capitola-by-the-Sea."