

Supes Kill Condos

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The would-be developers of the Porter-Sesnon beachlands ran into some tough luck this week when the County Board of Supervisors virtually ruled out condominiums as an acceptable use of the property.

More than a year ago the Supervisors adopted a Local Coastal Plan (LCP) that calls for use of the Aptos land as a public park with 115-130 campsites. The State of California has long planned to buy the property and create a park.

But private developers were able to pressure the Supes into leaving open the door for condos on Porter-Sesnon as an alternative use in the LCP. The Palo Alto-based consortium of Hare, Brewer and Kelley holds a 99-year lease on the property and still hopes to build up to 600 tourist-oriented residential units on it.

When the LCP was adopted last year, the Board agreed to include privately developed "visitor accommodation units" as a second possible use of Porter-Sesnon land. Most observers believe that a "visitor accommodation unit" would bear a striking resemblance to a condo.

The law works in mysterious ways and for several months the Supes have struggled with the obscure question of how small a "visitor accommodation unit" must be in order to be the same as a campsite in a public park. On Tuesday the Board ruled that housing units on the property can be no larger than 600-square feet if they are to have the same impact on resources as a campsite. Supervisors Dan Forbus and E. Wayne Moore opposed the majority's decision.

Senior partner Ryland Kelley was in the audience with his attorney Richard Allen when the Board made its decision. Allen rose to point out that a limit of 600-square feet is so small it essentially eliminates the possibility of developing the property.

Tuesday's ruling could also radically reduce the price of the land should Kelley decide to strike a deal with the state. Four years ago, the Palo Altans paid a little over a million dollars to lease the land for 99 years. Last month, before the Board's decision to restrict development, Kelley said the \$4 million appropriated by the state legislature would not be enough to buy him out.

For years opposition to development on the land has been led by the Friends of Porter-Sesnon (FOPS), a group comprised of Aptos neighbors and concerned people fr

throughout the County. FOPS President Vickie Powell said she considered Tuesday's action a victory. But the seemingly endless fight over Porter-Sesnon promises to continue.

The Board's decision will be sent to both the Coastal Commission and the County's own environmental planners for review. Then the Board will talk about it some more — and maybe make a final final decision.