

Thursday, Dec. 19, 1985

Wingspread proposal wins recommendation by planners

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SANTA CRUZ — It was 4:27 p.m. Planning Commission Chairwoman Denise Holbert directed the commission clerk to call the roll.

"Commissioner Skillicorn."

"Yes."

"Commissioner Eberly."

"Yes."

"Commissioner Burnap."

"Yes."

"Commissioner Britton."

"No."

"Commissioner Holbert."

"No."

And with that, the county Planning Commission washed its hands of Ryland Kelley's controversial Wingspread project — at least for the time being.

The commission vote to approve findings and conditions for Wingspread Plan B and send the project on to the Board of Supervisors did not come easily.

Though commissioners had approved the 295-unit condominium-conference center-performing arts complex in concept last month and spent several hours bickering with the planning staff over findings and conditions for Plan B's approval as recently as two weeks ago, it took three hours of additional public testimony, I-dotting and T-crossing to bring the matter to a conclusive vote.

And even when the voting was done, it wasn't entirely clear what the commission had concluded.

One of the conditions approved by the Planning Commission, at the insistence of Commissioner Ree Burnap, called for a "substantial" reduction in the number of condominium units Kelley would be permitted to build on the Porter-Sesnon property in Aptos.

But nowhere in the findings and conditions approved by commissioners was there any indication of how many condos would have to be scrapped to achieve a substantial reduction in the project's density.

Nor would Burnap be pinned down on what she meant by the word.

"What does it mean?" asked Chairwoman Holbert.

"Substantially," replied Burnap, "means 'a lot.'"

"That's really cool," said Holbert. "That doesn't mean anything. Can't you give us some percentage?"

"No," said Burnap, "I'm not willing to do that at this time."

After the commission vote, Kelley spokesman Tim Welch predicted that project density would become a "major question" when Plan B, along with Kelley's smaller development proposal, "Plan A," reaches the Board of Supervisors next month.

"What (they) mean by 'substantial' — that's the major condition," Welch said.

Welch, who indicated that Kelley would not readily assent to a "substantial" reduction in condos, also indicated that the developer would object to other conditions recommended by the Planning Commission.

Under one of the conditions approved by the commission Wednesday, Kelley would be required to guarantee the county a minimum of nearly \$1.3 million annually in net revenues from the Wingspread development initially, and more later on. Kelley would also be required to foot the bill for the county's legal costs and any damage settlements arising from litigation over the project, should the board approve it.

Welch indicated that Kelley would object to both conditions.

"We'll have to iron those things out," said Welch, who called the revenue guarantee a "tax levied on a single entity — us."

"They're requiring us to guarantee payment of a certain tax rate," he explained. "We're confident we'll pay that much (in property and room-occupancy taxes) without that in there."

Other conditions recommended by the commission Wednesday would require relocation of Plan B's three-hall performing arts complex, one of its lodges, the project's tennis courts and swimming pool and its main en-

trance.

If county supervisors approve Plan B, with the commission's recommended changes in the project's design, a further environmental impact study may be needed, according to the county planning staff. And if that occurs, the project will be returned to the commission yet again before it receives final approval.

Burnap, the acknowledged holder of the swing vote on Plan B, prolonged Wednesday's hearing with a point-by-point review of 33 typewritten pages of findings and conditions.

With Holbert and Commissioner Myrna Britton determined to vote against anything to do with approval of the project, and commissioners Ivan Eberly and Dale Skillicorn willing to vote for nearly anything that would move Plan B on to the Board of Supervisors, she seemed to be the only commission member interested in the fine print.

Attorney Celia Scott-Von der Muhll, representing Friends of Porter-Sesnon, which opposes the Wingspread development, appeared before the commission Wednesday to object to Local Coastal Plan (LCP) changes aimed at accommodating Plan B. She warned that the changes, if approved by the county, would result in wholesale commercial development of coastal parcels with land use designations similar to the Porter-Sesnon property's.

But planning staffers said that would not happen because the LCP amendments were specifically tied to the Porter-Sesnon site.

One area resident testified in favor of Kelley's development Wednesday.

Hap Hasty, of Aptos, told commissioners he would much rather see the Porter-Sesnon property developed by Kelley than turned into a state park, as Friends of Porter-Sesnon would prefer.

"I'm opposed to any more parks in the county," Hasty said. "All they do is bring (in) the rabble from over the hill."