

Lighthouse Field Becomes A New 'State Beach Park'

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The California Parks Commission officially designated Lighthouse Field as a state beach park Friday in a meeting in Santa Cruz.

Its action was anti-climatic, reflecting little of the disputes that took place for years to prevent the 37-acre coastline parcel from becoming a major hotel and convention center complex.

The commission's action to name the site "Lighthouse Field State Beach Park" followed state purchase of the site in the late 1970s and 1980 from three owners: \$450,000 to the city of Santa Cruz for 4.5 acres, \$5.7 million to Teachers Management Investment Corp. for 28.2 acres and an estimated \$700,000 Peter Pasetta for 3.5 acres.

What will be allowed at the park will be determined at public workshops in the coming months. Lighthouse Field Committee Chairman Bob Bell and city Parks Director Robert Thomas said they will encourage the public to participate in that process.

The commission noted the "beach park" designation would allow a wide range of activity, and could include some "natural preserve" areas if there are resources at the site that need protection.

Two members of the public, including area resident Ed Porter, Friday urged the site be protected from over-use. For several years there have been complaints about illegal campers and vandalism on the property.

Under the contract with the state, the city and county will pay all maintenance costs and 75 percent of development building costs.

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As the commission named the field and blufftop, Parks Commissioner Victoria Gibson, who was on the Central Coastal Commission when it blocked the proposed convention center, said:

"I support the name of 'Lighthouse Field State Beach Park. It has a long history here and united the people at a large meeting to fight off a major development. To them it is 'Lighthouse Field' and I don't think we could change that."

Pasetta owned the 37 acres and had dreamed of building a hotel-convention center complex of international shops overlooking Monterey Bay.

He had gone as far as to hire the famous architectural firm of Frank Lloyd Wright to come in with a motif and designs for what was to be called "The Court of Seven Seas."

There were major problems and delays for such a large scale development. In 1970, TMI purchased 28 acres and revealed plans to lease the site to a major hotel chain which would then build a hotel-convention center overlooking the bay.

TMI at first had little or no opposition to

its plans, and carried the blessing of the Santa Cruz City Council and the business community.

Little known to those forces was a movement coming called "environmentalism," and its practitioners had different ideas for Lighthouse Field.

They formed the Save Lighthouse Point Association in 1972 and they took their cause to the public.

The environmentalists through initiative put the issue on the June 1974 ballot and city of Santa Cruz voters went 2-to-1 to stop the city from using the acreage for a convention center.

Then they went in force to coastal committee hearings and swayed the regional and state commissions to block convention center plans.

They were successful in getting both the Santa Cruz City Council and the county Board of Supervisors to ask the state Parks Department to purchase the property.

None of it was easy for either side of the struggle, and those supporting a convention center for Santa Cruz continue to note that no performing arts and convention center has been built here.