

Local news

Green belt City may give \$1 million for greenbelt purchase

By KAREN CLARK

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SANTA CRUZ — The quest to buy the Bombay parcel and preserve it as open space is expected to get a huge boost Tuesday if the City Council votes to allocate \$1 million toward its purchase.

Councilmen Mike Rotkin, Scott Kennedy and Michael Hernandez have proposed taking \$1 million from the proceeds of the Pelton Avenue sale and earmarking it for the Bombay purchase.

A development proposal has been submitted for a portion of the 246-acre Bombay parcel on the western edge of Santa Cruz. But greenbelt proponents hope to nip that project in the bud by buying the property and preserving it.

The Lance-Kashian Co., which owns the property, has agreed to sell the land as late as the end of next November. The asking price has been at least \$3.5 million, but negotiations are continuing.

While the fund raising moves forward, the company's proposal to build 25 single-family homes on a portion of the property will continue to move through the city's planning process.

Rotkin said fund raising has been lagging, however, which is why he wants to jump-start it with a \$1 million infusion from the city's proceeds of the Pelton Avenue sale.

In late November, the council voted to sell the Pelton parcel, the site of the Homeless Garden Project for seven years, for

\$2.6 million to Pacific Union Homes Inc.

"I think it will help in the fund-raising efforts for people to know the city has a commitment that's real and concrete," said Rotkin. "It's become clear we need to pop in front ... not just promise pie in the sky."

The council was criticized for allowing Lance-Kashian to submit the 25-unit proposal even as fund-raising efforts resumed.

But the majority believed allowing a small portion of the property to be developed with the hope that most of it would remain in greenbelt was better than what was allowed in the General Plan. Under those guidelines, the owner would have been allowed to develop between seven

and 11 ranch homes spaced throughout the parcel, with no greenbelt remaining in the public trust.

But the best-case scenario, they said, would be for the public to buy the land outright over the next year and keep the entire acreage in open space.

In addition to discussing the contribution, city officials also are considering whether to seek voter approval for a parcel-tax increase or bond sale that would raise more money for the greenbelt.

Tuesday's discussion on the \$1 million contribution is on the council's afternoon session, which begins at 3:30 at City Hall, 809 Center St. The session will be broadcast live on cable Channel 72.

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