

Large turnout for hearing

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State ponders Lighthouse decision

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SANTA CRUZ — Residents and local officials crammed the City Council chamber this morning for the opening of a state Parks and Recreation Commission hearing on approval of the Lighthouse Field State Beach masterplan.

While local officials were hoping for quick approval of the plan, state commissioners worried about some aspects.

Commissioners wondered how the city is going to finance an erosion-control project for West Cliff Drive — the historic, scenic waterfront road that skirts the state beach boundary.

Also, commission Chairman John G. Williamson worried that approval of the plan today would be met with a backlash from local residents who felt their concerns had not been addressed.

Still at issue is what is to become of the

Lighthouse Point parking lot and West Cliff Drive.

The city owns Lighthouse Point and road rights of way in it. The state owns Lighthouse Field — 36 acres of open space across West Cliff Drive from the Point.

Surfers, longtime residents and members of a group called the West Cliff Drive Preservation Association told commissioners they don't want any changes to the drive or to the Point parking lot.

Longtime surfer Wes Reed, a member of the association and of the Santa Cruz Typographical Union, told commissioners:

"Our union requests Lighthouse Point and its parking lot remain city-owned and operated, as there is no reason for it to be connected to the state park...."

"Lighthouse Point is an integral part of West Cliff Drive and, together, they

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Lighthouse decision

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provide a type of entertainment which far surpasses the value of the Lighthouse Field Park. We cannot afford to lose Lighthouse Point just to gain a new state park.

Surfers testified the Lighthouse Point parking lot is needed for beach rescue access.

Several residents spoke in favor of an amendment to the plan that would preserve the route of West Cliff Drive. The original plan said West Cliff Drive should be moved away from the coastline.

Supervisor Gary Patton, a leader in the movement to save Lighthouse Field from development during the early 1970s, said it was "important" for motorists to be able to view the sea from automobiles along West Cliff Drive.

Robert Bell, former chairman of the city/county Lighthouse Field Advisory Committee, testified, "I doubt you have ever seen a plan where there has been greater participation in the planning process.

"I urge you to approve it without further delay."

But Chairman Williamson worried, if the plan were approved today, "Will there be another unheardbody of citizens...who...will feel dispossessed?"

"Santa Cruz is pretty diverse. One can never say Santa Cruz is one," replied Assistant City Manager Jesus Armas.

Armas said the city would use taxes on tourists (a hotel and motel tax) to finance erosion control on West Cliff Drive over the next "two or three years." The project is expected to cost more than \$200,000.