

Planners reject Capitola seawall proposal

Beach Erosion
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No seawall for Depot Hill.

That was decision rendered by the city Planning Commission Thursday night after hearing more than 1½-hours of public testimony and discussion.

The decision is expected to be appealed.

The Depot Hill Geological Abatement District, made of up 18 property owners, had proposed a privately financed \$2 million project calling for a quarter-mile-long, 25-foot-tall seawall that would protect

homes and sewer lines from wave-driven erosion. Without the seawall, sewer lines would be lost in 10 to 15 years and oceanfront homes would be threatened in about 35 years, the district claimed.

The commission voted against the proposal, offering these reasons:

- It's not in the public interest to build a seawall on public property to save private property.

- Not all 18 property owners in the district want a seawall, and those opposed should not have to pay for something they don't want.

- Alternatives to a seawall, such as drainage improvements to the top of Depot Hill, were not ade-

quately studied.

- Installing a seawall would cover an area rich in fossils described by one person addressing the commission as "Capitola's museum of natural history."

- Erecting a seawall would not save the public path atop the cliff.

- A seawall would eventually deny public access along the shore.

- It's not known how another seawall would impact the rest of the coastline.

The commission also said additional options should be studied to protect the homes, and there is adequate time before the properties are threatened for erosion-

slowing technology to advance.

On Friday, Bob Tomaselli, president of the abatement district, said the seawall fight will be taken to City Council.

"I don't think this is the last round by any means," said Tomaselli.

As for the three property owners who don't favor a seawall, Tomaselli said excluding their properties from the proposed seawall would compromise its integrity.

Members of the district who oppose the seawall could appeal to City Council to dissolve the district.

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