

Lighthouse Field Future Is Up In Air

By TOM HONIG
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The future of Lighthouse Field dangles in no-man's land today following a stormy session of the Santa Cruz City Council which ended abruptly amidst a flurry of controversy and profanity.

With Mayor Joe Ghio abstaining, the council late Tuesday refused to approve a proposed financial agreement between the city and county regarding the development, operation and maintenance of a proposed park at Lighthouse Field. The agreement is a must before the state will fork over some \$4.6 million to purchase the 37-acre parcel, as it has agreed to do.

Three members of the council — Larry Edler, John Mahaney and Jim Hammond

— blocked approval of the agreement because they didn't like the terms of the contract. And while the council prepared to make a counter-proposal to the county, a group of spectators, furious and frustrated backers of the plan, shouted out in protest.

The disorder irked Edler, who was presiding over the meeting during Ghio's abstention; he angrily adjourned the session, which only contributed to the protesters' fury. Their sarcastic howls of protest turned profane, while the councilmembers who had backed the plan sadly watched the uproar.

Councilman Bert Muhly, who helped to write the agreement, looked like a man with the weight of the world on his shoulders, as he sat in his chair behind the council dais and spoke glumly about pick-

ing up the pieces. Another councilmember who had voted in favor of the agreement said of the protesting citizens, "They blew it."

And Ghio, the potential tie-breaking vote who abstained because of a financial investment with Teachers Management Investment Co., the owners of the land, commented, "I hate scenes like this. Now I won't be able to sleep tonight."

According to Muhly, discussion of the park agreement will be introduced at a meeting of the council next Tuesday.

The defeat of the proposed agreement was a defeat for the work of Supervisor Gary Patton and Muhly, who had formulated it with the help of a consultant, William Penn Mott, former state parks director. Patton had sold the package to

the county board earlier Tuesday, but the city council balked at what some of its members saw as a one-sided contract.

Specifically, the three who blocked approval of the agreement protested a clause that limited the county's liability for development costs while not putting a cap on the city's. The proposed agreement called for the city and county to share expenses up to \$500,000. That would be the limit of the county's responsibility, and the city would have to pay all the costs beyond \$500,000.

Edler also worried about the clause that the city would pay for 75 per cent of the park operation. He said that although he didn't protest that agreement for the present, he didn't want to see it "in perpetuity."

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and probably have little impact on South Africa.

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Muhly, Melville and DePalma answered the objection to the development agreement by pointing out that the city has control of the project's development. The council could ensure, the proponents argued, that the development cost would not rise above \$500,000. And if it did not, the city would be required to pay only half.

Mott, the former parks director, was in the audience, and suggested that the council strike out the clause saying that the city must bear all the costs beyond \$500,000.

Just prior to the uproarious finish of the meeting, Edler indicated that he would support the agreement if the 75-25 agreement for maintenance was qualified by a clause saying that the matter would be reviewed every five years. Before that counter-proposal could be considered, however, tempers flared and the meeting was over.

Muhly and Edler indicated today that the counter-proposal will be presented when the council meets again on Tuesday.

"It would have been proposed last night if everybody had maintained their cool and calm," Edler said.

The backers of the park are afraid that the state will not come up with the purchase of the property if the city and county start to bicker.

Mott told the council, "There is skepticism in Sacramento as to whether the city and county can agree. The state would like to get out (of the purchase)."

Patton also was present at the meeting, and he commented that other supervisors had agreed to the joint venture with the city somewhat reluctantly, because they view the proposed park as basically a city park. "I've tried my best in convincing the other supervisors," Patton said, and added that the council was "imperiling the ability of this city to get \$4.6 million from the state and almost a half a million from the county."