

Conflicts stall Sky Park plan

By Judy Brenis 4-8-87

The former Sky Park airport property lies within the city of Scotts Valley, but 96 acres of land along Mount Hermon Road are owned by the city of Santa Cruz, Harmony Foods, and former Scotts Valley Mayor Bill Graham.

Differences among the property owners and between the property owners and the city of Scotts Valley have delayed development of the site.

"Economically unfeasible," is what Peter Katzberger, Santa Cruz City planning director, and Robert Lynch, president of Harmony Foods, called Scotts Valley's general plan requirements for development of that property during last week's council meeting.

The city's general plan land use designation is 20 percent shopping center development, 30 percent medium-high residential density and 50 percent open - space recreation.

During general plan hearings last year, council decided not to zone

the former airport area as open space as had been planned. Instead the council designated it a specific planning area. Before development can take place, a plan for development of the entire area must be approved.

Santa Cruz had opposed the designation of the Sky Park area as open space because it conflicted with its own plan to partially develop the area, thus increasing its financial gain on the land.

"Under the constraints of the general plan there is nothing we can do," said Lynch, who owns 17½ acres of the property.

Santa Cruz, which owns 46 acres, proposes about 31 percent in open space and the rest in commercial-industrial and housing uses.

"It looked reasonable to us," Katzberger said of his city's proposal. "Fifty percent open space is a difficult proposition to buy into at this point."

But council refused to consider Santa Cruz's proposal. Mayor Phil Liberty pointed out the Santa Cruz conceptual plan did not meet the

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general plan requirements, and also that it did not include the portions of land owned by Lynch, Graham and two minor property owners.

Instead, council requested that the city of Santa Cruz hire a planning consultant to work with both cities to develop a specific plan of development for the property.

Council asked that Santa Cruz consider the hiring of Environmental Management Consultants, which helped prepare the Scotts Valley General Plan and "is capable of working for both cities," said Mayor Phil Liberty.

"An outside consultant is necessary in staff's viewpoint so that the interests of the city of Scotts Valley are kept clearly in the forefront," City Administrator August Caires wrote in his recommendation to council.

Councilman Roger Anderson suggested Santa Cruz decrease its residential density as one way of meeting some of the open space requirement.

The current medium-high density zoning allows for nine dwelling units per acre maximum.

"Just because it is designated open space that doesn't mean you can't do anything with it," Councilman Joe Miller said. "There are open space uses which can generate revenue to the city of Santa Cruz and I encourage you to think of other ways to use open space."

Lynch told council that he has

looked into "other uses" of open space, such as stables or waterslides and that neither would pan out economically.

"I know something about what it takes to run a successful business, I have 300 employees working for me," he said. "And these other uses are not profitable."

Lynch also disagreed with council's desire to lump all Sky Park property owners together.

"There needs to be a plan, but it needs to be done in a way which is economically feasible," he said.