

Wingspread crushed by voter onslaught

Long fight over project appears over

By KATHARINE BALL
STAFF WRITER

In the end, the most expensive campaign in Santa Cruz County history bought Wingspread developer Ryland Kelley nothing but a ringing defeat.

Yesterday, voters rejected the project by almost a 2-1 margin. The final tally was 46,077 against and 25,082 in favor.

The vote on Measure A climaxed a nine-year saga in which Kelley has tried to win permission to develop the 66-acre Porter Sesnon Property just east of New Brighton State Beach. His final plan, rejected by the voters, called for a conference center with 473 units, three performing arts halls available for public use and several playing fields that would also be available for public use.

Kelley supporters said last night they expected him to immediately submit a building-permit application for either a recreational vehicle camp-

ground or a motel with 115-131 rooms. The county's Local Coastal Plan would allow either of these projects.

Kelley's defeat followed a campaign in which he spent \$340,000, through his Palo Alto development firm of Hare, Brewer and Kelley, and his opponents spent an estimated maximum of \$10,000 to \$12,000. Kelley bought numerous radio television and newspaper spots, while his opponents staged media events, including bulldozing a mural effigy of the Porter Sesnon property. The campaign was also marked by repeated theft and damage to "Yes on A" signs.

Opponents, through debates and campaign literature, apparently managed to cast a

strong shadow of doubt on Kelley's promises to pay the county \$1 million a year in rent on the project and to build three performing arts halls.

Cherie Bobbe, an exultant member of the Committee Against Measure A, said last night, "I don't know what our campaign did. You feel like that (anti-Wingspread) vote was already there. You don't convince 65 percent of the people."

Wingspread supporters and opponents both said they thought Kelley's big spending hurt him with the voters. Several "No on A" people said last night that donations from county residents began to pour in to their campaign immediately after Kelley filed his first campaign spending report on May 21.

The traffic issue may have played a key part in Wingspread's defeat, too. While the Yes on A campaign promised \$700,000 in "traffic mitigations," it appeared that many

voters wanted no more traffic, period.

Rowland Rebele, who led the Yes on A campaign, said last night he attributed his side's defeat to "prevarications put forth by the opposition."

Rebele cited a last-minute mailer that falsely stated Wingspread could cost county taxpayers "up to \$10 million," various statements by Supervisor Gary Patton, and a finding by the Santa Cruz City Council that building new halls at Wingspread would hurt chances to renovate the Civic Auditorium.

"Statements like 'This developer is a rapist from over in Palo Alto' — that's tough to fight against," Rebele said.

Rebele also said Kelley's big spending "might have hurt him. But he wanted to do that," Rebele said. "I wasn't going to second-guess him."

Some of the radio and TV ads apparently rubbed voters the wrong way.

Commenting on one radio spot featuring a child begging for "a place to play" at Wingspread Beach, supervisorial candidate Dave Tunno said, "My God, you'd think this was Watts." He called the ad "an insult."

Ironically, Tunno, who was a stalwart Wingspread supporter in the 1984 election, apparently rode the coattails of anti-Wingspread sentiment last night, forcing Midcounty incumbent Supervisor Robley Levy into a runoff.

Throughout this year's campaign, Tunno refused to take a position on Wingspread, while Levy was forced to defend her decision to cast the swing vote in its favor last year.

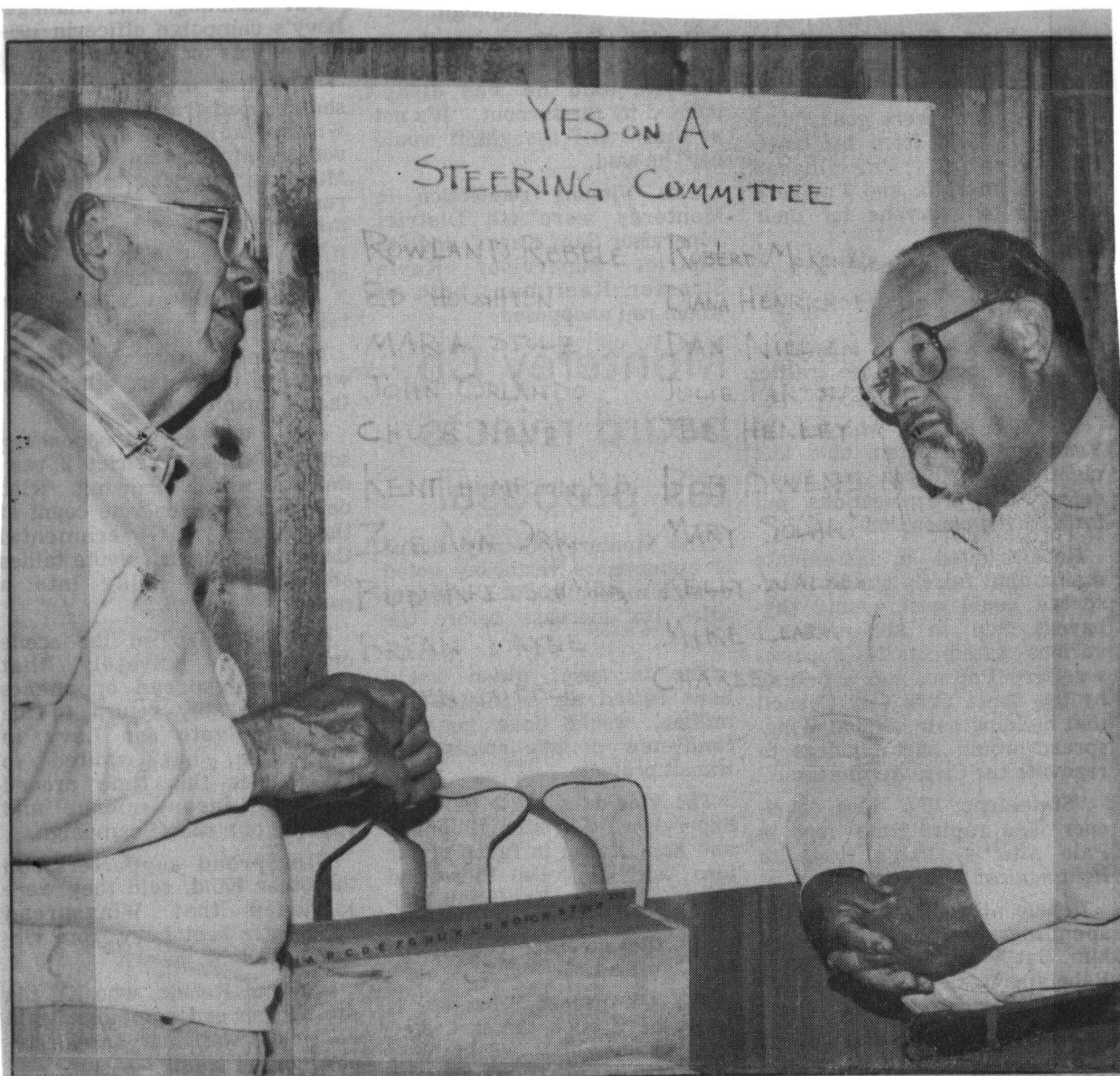
Supervisor Patton, who along with Joe Cucchiara has consistently opposed Wingspread, said last night, "It's clear that Joe Cucchiara and I understood what the people of this county wanted."

He agreed that her support of Wingspread cost Levy a victory last night.

"The substantial 'no' vote is correlated to Robley's problems," Patton said. He added that she is a "good supervisor, although wrong on this issue."

REFERENCE

WATSONVILLE
Register-PAJARONIAN
June 8, 1988



Chip Scheuer

Wingspread backers Bud Kretschmer and Charles Kahrs don't hide disappointment.