

Wingspread shot down

By **STEVE SHENDER**
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — County voters pushed developer Ryland Kelley's controversial Wingspread Beach project over the Porter-Sesnon bluffs Tuesday, voting by a near 2-1 margin to reject the proposed hotel, conference center and performing arts complex.

At 12:30 a.m. today, With 139 of 182 precincts reporting, the vote on Measure A — the binding ballot referendum on the

Wingspread development — was 34,673 against and 18,344 in favor.

The resounding defeat came despite a massive radio, TV and mail advertising campaign fueled by more than \$340,000 from the coffers of Kelley's Palo Alto development firm, Hare, Brewer and Kelley.

The defeat of Measure A means that the project is dead, even though the Board of Supervisors voted 3-2 last year to approve it.

But voters' overwhelming rejection of Wingspread doesn't mean the Porter-Sesnon meadow is safe from Kelley's bulldozers.

Kelley, who said through a spokesman Tuesday night that "we will get over our disappointment at the loss of the Wingspread dream," vowed to move "forward quickly" on one of two alternate development plans for the site.

Kelley spokesman Tim Welch said the developer would soon return to the county

Planning Department with an alternate proposal for developing the property, which he leased from the University of California in 1978 for \$1.75 million.

One possibility, Welch said, is that Kelley will revive a proposal for a 197-unit hotel-conference center which was rejected by the Board of Supervisors two years ago. Another possibility, said Welch, is that Kelley will seek to develop a "luxury" recreational vehicle park on the site — "one that would get a premium

rental; with a clubhouse, tennis courts and a swimming pool."

The county's Local Coastal Program would have had to be changed to accommodate the Wingspread project. But the LCP already allows up to 130 campsites, and a greater number of motel units at Porter-Sesnon. Welch said that both the lodge and the RV park plans would be consistent with the LCP.

Welch indicated Kelley will make a decision on which project to push by the end of the month. "Last week, when we talked about this," he said, "we agreed that we didn't want to dawdle."

"He can try whatever he wants," Celia Scott-Von der Muhll, an environmentalist attorney who has represented Wingspread foes throughout their long battle with Kelley, said Tuesday night. "That doesn't mean he'll get it."

"After all, he got (Wingspread) out of the Board of Supervisors, but county voters turned it down."

"He's better off selling (Porter-Sesnon) to State Parks and getting out of our way."

The state Department of Parks and Recreation stands ready to buy Porter-Sesnon with \$4 million in park bond funds which were set aside by the Legislature at the urging of state Sen. Henry Mello, D-Watsonville, a number of years

ago. Kelley, who has already poured an estimated \$8 million into his effort to develop Porter-Sesnon, has been unwilling to sell.

Scott-Von der Muhll said Kelley could get more for Porter-Sesnon than the \$4 million already set aside by the state. "He's got friends in the Legislature," she said.

"How's he going to make money off an RV park?" Scott-Von der Muhll scoffed.

Kelley said through Welch Tuesday night that "truth was the victim in this election." And he said that the county would "never ... be without long-term regrets" over the defeat of Measure A.

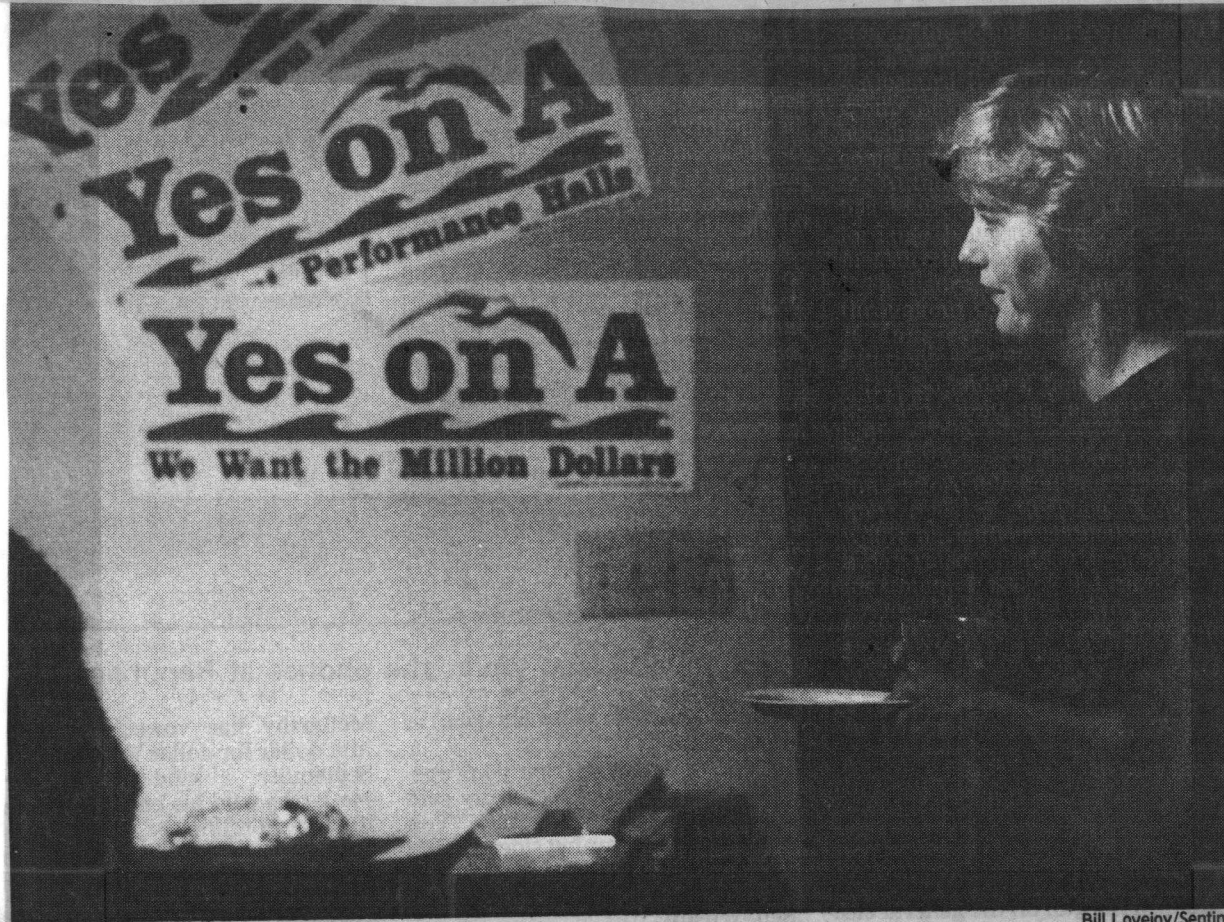
Tuesday's vote climaxed a heated eight-year battle that divided county liberals, as well as residents of Aptos Supervisor Robley Levy's Second District.

For Wingspread foes, it was a battle heavily laden with symbolism. The Porter-Sesnon meadow came to stand for the entire county coastline, and Kelley's name be-

came synonymous — in opponents' eyes — with rapacious development.

Kelley, who raised local liberal hackles in the early 1970s when he broke ground for the Pajaro Dunes development just in time to beat the restrictions of the newly enacted state Coastal Initiative, played a complex cat-and-mouse game with county environmentalists throughout the long Wingspread fight.

The developer split the liberal community early on by tying his hotel-conference center with a per-



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Measure A backers like Diane Pettinger were left holding an empty plate after 2-1 rout.

REFERENCE

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL
June 8, 1988

forming arts complex and recruiting county culture-lovers to his cause with promises of hefty annual subsidies for the arts. He split the liberal majority on the Board of Supervisors with promises of millions of dollars in annual revenues for cash-poor Santa Cruz County.

At the outset of the Wingspread fight, Kelley offered two proposals for development of the Porter-Sesnon property. "Plan A" called for a 197-unit hotel-conference center, tennis courts and other facilities, but no performance halls.

"Plan B" called for the performing arts complex and 295 hotel units — subdividable into two units each.

There was no support on the board for Plan A. Critics charged that the plan was a red herring, put forward to be knocked down — as it eventually was — in favor of the larger Plan B. Others said it was merely a fallback position for the developer, in case supervisors rejected the larger plan.

Now Kelley may try to revive Plan A in his seemingly relentless drive to develop the Porter-Sesnon property.