

# Battle of the petition rages over Wingspread development

By JAMIE MARKS

Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — The battle of the petitions is raging in Aptos, where friends and foes of the proposed Wingspread Beach project are vying for the upper hand.

Two informal public opinion polls have been undertaken, with the results depending on which side is believed.

The Wingspread Beach development either has overwhelming support or undying opposition to it.

According to results released Monday by Tim Welch, manager of Conference Associates which wants to develop the performing arts and condominium complex, Wingspread Beach has strong support.

In a four-month long effort, Welch gathered 3,322 signatures in favor of the project. Beginning in December, Welch mailed out letters to residents countywide, asking them to return a stamped card endorsing the project. Some 31,863 letters were sent out.

Signatures were also garnered from door-to-door canvasses and at shopping centers, he added.

The proverbial fly in the ointment for Welch's results came after information hit the press that the number of units being planned by developers Hare, Brewer and Kelley is actually 585, not the 295 number of units being bandied about.

After that information became public in early May, the Friends of Porter-Sesnon, who have been actively campaigning against the project for four years, began their own petition drive.

In a three-week period, spokeswoman Vickie Powell said her group gathered 1,039 signatures against the proposal, primarily from residents in Aptos.

The six-inch pile of green petitions was delivered to the Board of Supervisors at last week's meeting during oral communications.

Powell said Monday that "Many people who signed our petitions are totally opposed to the lock-out units."

This was the room plan that allowed for nearly double the number of units as previously thought.

And Powell said some of the petitions contain comments from residents who signed cards sent to them from Conference Associates. One signer said she had responded to the endorsement card, not knowing that the project included condominium and hotel rooms. She had been under the mistaken impression it was only for a performing arts center, Powell said.

Welch said Monday that Conference Associates still continues to get a smattering of cards every week. And he said the group may do another survey to assess its strength.

He said in a prepared press statement that "Volunteers gathering signatures (for the development) reported much less opposition than the heat of the discussion in the past would have suggested."

Of the more than 31,000 persons contacted, almost 9 percent returned endorsement cards. The results poured in at a ratio of 9 to 1 in favor of the project, he said.

Expanding on the results of that survey, Welch said, "There have been some very vocal and visible people opposed to Wingspread, but I think our results show that this group is definitely in the minority."

"The vast majority of people who are familiar with the project understand the tremendous benefits Wingspread would bring to Santa Cruz County," he said.

That would be \$1.2 million in new taxes a year, 250 new jobs, and a playing field for soccer enthusiasts. Also, there would be three performing arts halls open to the public, with half of the seats reserved for visitors.

But to Powell, much of that information is just as

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unreliable as the controversy over the doubling of units.

"No one can believe what he's (developer Ryland Kelley) saying from one day to the next," said Powell. "The letters state very clearly what people want."

Five points are enumerated in the letters being circulated by Friends of Porter-Sesnon. They are that residents of the county don't want to lose that 67 acres of open space; that the county and state have preferred the site be a park (the state has set aside \$4 million to buy the land, should Kelley accept the offer by July 1985); that traffic, noise and building heights exceed acceptable levels; and finally, that the tax incentives might not be realized, "since existence of the development will be a strong incentive for incorporation of Aptos."

Powell said, "In many ways Wingspread is like Lighthouse Field ... When it comes down to the final line, the community at large will voice its opinion quite clearly."

She vowed to keep up the petition drive through door-to-door canvasses and shopping-center card tables, predicting that in four months, when the project comes to the Board of Supervisors for consideration, she will have garnered 4,000 signatures.

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