

A park proposed for Porter-Sesnon

By LANE WALLACE

A proposed major development on the Porter-Sesnon property should be scuttled if the state or county can acquire the land for a park use by 1986, Santa Cruz County planning commissioners recommended this morning as part of their Local Coastal Plan review.

The recommendation, if approved by county supervisors, would steepen an already uphill fight of developer Hare, Brewer and Kelley, which has applied to build 627 housing units, theaters, and a small commercial area next to New Brighton Beach between the freeway and Monterey Bay. The project is known as Wingspread.

Hare, Brewer and Kelley acquired a 99-year lease on the University of California-owned property two years ago. Last fall, the Wingspread proposal (most of which is for short-term rentals) was submitted to county officials.

The county then required an environmental impact report on the project, but didn't sign the contract for the reports to be completed. Hare, Brewer and Kelley filed a lawsuit over the delay. The case comes up in court Thursday.

Before the lease to Hare, Brewer and Kelley, the state Department of Parks and Recreation had the Porter-Sesnon land on its list of possible acquisitions. Santa Cruz County supervisors urged the state to keep the land on that list.

If the land were to be purchased for a state park (for expansion of the New Brighton Beach State Park), some arrangement would have to be worked out with Hare, Brewer and Kelley.

The county planning staff had recommended that the land be designated for park use, with no time frame recommended.

Commissioners Ivan Eberly and Chuck Barr voted against the five-year waiting period for the developers, indicating they don't want to create roadblocks for the developers.

Barr also spoke against the idea of the county acquiring the land, wondering aloud "if the county is serious about developing a park for the whole state of California."

Included in the commission's recommendation was a clause saying that approval any development (such as Wingspread) would be dependent on water availability. The land is in the Soquel Creek County Water District, which has a ban on new water connections in force.

The commission was expected to finish its Local Coastal Planning hearings today. Supervisors will begin hearings Tuesday, with sessions at 9 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. The afternoon and evening sessions will deal with land use. Three sessions are also scheduled Thursday. The last session for public testimony will be on April 7.