

Wingspread-hearing site touches off new dispute

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Santa Cruz County supervisors are asking the California Coastal Commission to hold a hearing on the proposed Wingspread development in San Francisco, rather than in Marina del Rey, near Los Angeles.

The hearing is scheduled for February.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Robley Levy said she wanted the Coastal Commission to rule on the controversial Wingspread proposal as soon as possible, however, even if that means the hearing will be held in Southern California.

Supervisor Gary Patton disagreed, accusing Levy and other supervisors of trying to "disenfranchise" local residents who might want to testify at the Coastal Commission hearing and who might not have the money to travel to Southern California.

"It is unfair for us to take an action that would make it impossible for anyone to testify unless they are wealthy," Patton said.

He proposed instead that the supervisors ask the Coastal Commission to defer the Wingspread hearing to its March meeting in San Francisco, if a San Francisco meeting can't be arranged for February.

But Levy said having the Coastal Commission make its decision soon was more important than having the meeting held closer to Santa Cruz, because the Wingspread proposal is to be submitted to county voters for approval in June.

"If the proposal is substantially changed by the Coastal Commission, we would be doing the voters a disservice" by putting an inaccurate description of the project on the ballot, said Levy.

Patton and Supervisor Joe Cucchiara disagreed, saying the question was really whether Santa Cruz voters wanted a park on the Porter Sesnon property instead of a development. They said the specifics of the Wingspread proposal were irrelevant to that question.

But Levy said, "Part of the problem with the (Wingspread) project is that it has never been fully defined. It will be, after the Coastal Commission hearing. It is important to put a specific development plan before the voters."

Patton then accused Levy of

trying to "manipulate" approval of the project, because the affluent Wingspread developers will probably be able to attend the Coastal Commission hearing wherever it is held, while concerned less affluent citizens may not be able to.

Levy said, "I take exception to your comments. ... The public can make a decision up or down on the project (when it is on the June ballot). This is an attempt to put before the voters a fair and complete ballot measure."

County Counsel Dwight Herr said he thought the Coastal Commission might hold the Wingspread portion of its February meeting in San Francisco.