

# Aptos preservationists decry shift of funds

## Polo Grounds project awarded money set aside for Valencia Hall

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APTOS — Historical preservationists and soccer players delivered impassioned pleas to the Board of Supervisors Friday, asking them to provide their children with a future and a past.

The common denominator was money.

As the Aptos Polo Grounds access road nears completion, county soccer and Little League coaches are trying to hold on to the approximate \$90,000 left over from the first phase. But advocates for restoring the historic Valencia Hall and post office in Aptos say the money was theirs to begin with.

"Take your conservation of a building that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places seriously. And if

you see no value in doing so, then tell us," restoration advocate Carol Tren-gove said to the board.

But many of the speakers at the budget hearing said if the Polo Grounds project loses the remaining \$90,000, it might stall and leave a road to nowhere.

"I understand the importance of preserving our heritage, but we must put our children before that history," said Kathy Parenti, president of the Aptos Soccer Club.

The supervisors decided the extra money should remain with the Polo Grounds project but directed county staff to begin meeting with the Valencia Hall advocates.

"There is no question it's a higher priority to get the polo grounds and

athletic fields built than restore Valencia Hall," said Barry Samuel, director of County Parks Open Space and Cultural Services.

Pat Manning, one organizer of the restoration campaign, was optimistic about the hall's future but was disappointed in Supervisor Symons' lack of support for their position.

The push to restore the Valencia Hall, which was built by F.A. Hihn in the 1880s for workers in the Valencia sawmill, began in earnest in 1982. Throughout the following decade the hall received state historical bond grants, state park grants and Measure E (earthquake) funds from the county.

The fund at one time totaled around \$300,000. According to restoration campaign organizer Pat Manning, that money kept rolling over each year. The county, she said, kept promising the hall would be moved away from the steep bank where it sits and would be restored.

It never has been, and in 1995 the

Board of Supervisors decided to transfer \$200,000 out of the Valencia Hall fund for the Polo Grounds project, according to a memo from the county administrative office.

After the decision, second district supervisor Walt Symons said he had been aware of the need to restore Valencia Hall, but said since he was elected the Polo Grounds has taken higher priority. Symons said he had talked about the issue with people before but he said "the very first time anybody has come to me on Valencia Hall was a week ago Monday."

Manning and other Valencia Hall advocates said they have been fighting for the hall's preservation since 1982 and had, in the last several years, burnt out.

"Why do I have to keep dogging them?" Manning said. "After the money was allocated, the project should have been done."