

APTOS

Par 3 lies fallow

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While golfers line up for tee times at most county golf courses, the 14-acre former Par 3 golf course along Highway 1 in Aptos sits vacant, growing a bumper crop of weeds.

The nine-hole course at 2600 Mar Vista Drive closed more than a year ago, much to the dismay of golfers.

However, if county Supervisor Walt Symons has his way, the course one day will reopen as a county park, offering an inexpensive place for beginning golfers to play.

Symons, who is leaving the Board of Supervisors at the end of the year, said "hundreds and hundreds" of people have contacted him asking for the golf course to be reopened.

"The No. 1 question I get is, 'When is the Par 3 going to reopen?'" Symons said. "There is tremendous support. It comes up at every community meeting. Everyone supports the idea of no homes and a par-3 golf course, which it's zoned for."

Symons would like to see the county buy the land with funds from the newly passed \$1.5 billion state Watershed, Wildlife and Parks Improvement Bond introduced by Assemblyman Fred Keeley.

The money will be available in January, Symons said.

Developers have proposed constructing buildings on the property, which Symons opposes.

"I want it to stay a par-3 golf course," he said. "It would be preserving a recreational facility for the community that has been in use for years. Generations of kids have played golf there."

Despite its recreational value, Symons called the \$5.5 million price tag "totally unreasonable."

Sunny McFadden of Aptos, who owns 7.4 acres of the site, said, "We have not been contacted by the county. We would like to sell the property. If the county has the money, we'd be happy to sell it to them."

McFadden declined to speculate what the property would be used for other than a golf course.

Grant Wrathall Jr. of Watsonville, who owns the remaining 6.2 acres, was not available for comment.

Real estate agent Barbara Le Va of Capitol Realty said the larger parcel is listed for \$3 million and the smaller for \$2.5 million.

"It is for sale or for rent," Le Va said. "Other than that, there's no comment. The owners don't want to talk about it."

The property is zoned for parks and recreation, she noted, adding, "If someone chooses to change the zoning, that's their option."

However, no one has approached the county to apply for a zoning change, according to county planners.

"We have no plans to change the designation of the property from parks and recreation," said Mark Deming, principal planner for the county. "I haven't talked to anyone in the past year who wanted to do anything other than parks and recreation."

However, the county is not actively exploring the property as a possible park.

The site is not designated as a county park, Deming said, and it hasn't gone through hearings.

"If you want to make an offer, I'll be happy to write it up," agent La Va said.