

# Developer says big Wingspread proposal in jeopardy

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Even though his firm has been "in dialogue" with the state about an alternate use of the property, Ryland Kelley said last week he would still prefer to go ahead with his original idea for the Wingspread Beach development on the Porter Sesnon property.

But Kelley, head of the Palo Alto development firm of Hare, Brewer and Kelley, conceded that the numerous procedural roadblocks that have stymied the Wingspread proposal have brought that project's chances to the edge of extinction.

The latest roadblock came in the form of an opinion by the County Counsel that the Wingspread project application now resting in the planning department cannot proceed without another environmental impact report (EIR).

Kelley, through his subsidiary firm of Conference Associates, had maintained an EIR prepared two years ago for a

much larger project should be sufficient to serve as the impact document for the scaled-down Wingspread project now being proposed.

Under the newest proposal, Kelley's firm would erect on the 66-acre beachside parcel near New Brighton State Beach a complex that would include 295 vacation rental units plus a performing arts complex and recreational playing fields. The performing arts and recreational facilities would be turned over to community foundations for community use.

Kelley also has an application in for an alternate project (called Project A to distinguish it from the bigger project, called Project B) that would consist of 198 vacation rental units and no performing arts or recreational facilities.

However the Project A application was made only to provide the developers with a fallback position in case

Project B (the one which includes the performing arts and recreational facilities) was ultimately rejected. It's been clear all along that Kelley's organization was counting on winning approval for the larger project.

But Kelley said that if the Board of Supervisors doesn't at least approve the concept of the Project B fairly soon, it could mean the project is dead.

Kelley said it would delay the project for "at least another year" if another EIR is required. He said it would simply not be financially feasible for his organization to invest that much more time and money in the process unless there was assurance that the county governing board favored the project.

When Kelley says he needs board approval, he's essentially talking about needing the assent of one supervisor, Robley Levy. That's because

Levy is the only supervisor who has yet to take a firm position on the Wingspread concept. Both Gary Patton and Joe Cucchiara — who along with Levy make up what is generally called the "liberal majority" of the board — have opposed private development on the Porter Sesnon land, while the two "conservatives" on the board, E. Wayne Moore Jr. and Dan Forbus, have said they support the Wingspread proposal.

Levy has refused to make any commitment on any project on the property until the propositions, with all the information about them, come officially before the board.

Kelley called Levy's position "gutless." The developer insisted that enough studies had been done, at considerable expense, in the four-plus years that he has been trying to get a project approved, to provide all the information anybody would

need to be able to come to an informed conclusion about the merits of Wingspread.

"I just can't believe there isn't a way for Mrs. Levy and her board to get the matter before them and make a decision," Kelley said. "They want to duck the issue for another year. They're the captive of their staff and the public ought to know it." Kelley said "we'd be willing to go ahead (with the EIR) if they (the board) would give us some conceptual encouragement."

As for his firm's conversations with the state over possibly developing an "Asilomar of the arts" on Porter Sesnon as an alternative to Wingspread, Kelley said they were in a "very preliminary" stage.

(Asilomar, from which the concept takes its name, is a state-owned conference center in Pacific Grove.)

Those conversations were undertaken, he said, only

because of the relentless opposition to any private development on the property by county political activists.

Kelley conceded that his firm had discussed selling its lease on the Porter Sesnon property to the state, as was reported last week.

Kelley's firm holds a 99-year lease on the property, which is owned by the University of California. The lease was purchased in 1978 for \$1.8 million. The state has already offered Kelley \$4 million for the lease under the terms of legislation authored by State Sen. Henry Mello, D-Watsonville.

The state would use the land for a park, which is what the opponents of the Wingspread proposal desire.

But Kelley has persistently refused to sell. The latest negotiations involve the possibility that the state would purchase the lease, then allow Hare,

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Brewer and Kelley, as a "concessionaire" to operate the so-called "Asilomar of the Arts" complex that would be erected

on the property.

Just what that complex would consist of and how it would be financed would have to be considered as negotiations proceed — if they do proceed — Kelley said.

Meanwhile, Kelley said the applications for both projects A and B are still alive, but the major project's future appears to depend on some sort of board approval fairly soon.

"There's got to be some way that some creative leadership can get this before the board," Kelley said.