

Supervisor gets 'clear' Wingspread message

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SANTA CRUZ — State Department of Parks and Recreation officials view the Porter-Sesnon property as a "developable site," and do not see purchase of Wingspread developer Ryland Kelley's lease on the 66-acre parcel as a commitment to keeping the land in open space, according to Second District Supervisor Robley Levy.

That's the "clear message" Levy says she gained from a meeting between herself, Kelley, Parks and Recreation officials and State Sen. Henry Mello in Mello's Sacramento office two weeks ago.

During that meeting, Kelley formally presented parks officials with a proposal for a complicated lease/lease-back deal, under

which the parks department would purchase Kelley's 99-year lease on the Porter-Sesnon land and then lease the property back to him for development of a hotel-conference center and performing arts complex there.

Kelley is seeking a total of \$5.5 million for the Porter-Sesnon lease and a six-acre parcel he owns adjoining the Porter-Sesnon land.

A state official has called Kelley's proposal a "highly unusual" one for the Parks Department, which normally limits its development activities to campgrounds and day-use picnic areas.

The official, Parks Department acquisition chief Ken Mitchell, said last week that a high-level department task force had been appointed to study the proposal.

Levy, who offered her assessment of the

state's intentions in a letter to Vickie Powell-Murray, chairwoman of Friends of Porter-Sesnon, said she believed "State Parks is entertaining (the) proposed lease purchase/lease-back arrangement for a substantial development density on Porter-Sesnon."

The supervisor, said however, that whatever the state intends, any proposed development on the property would have to be reviewed and approved by the county.

She also blistered Powell-Murray for accusing her of participating in a back-room deal with Mello, Kelley and parks officials.

Insisting she had made no commitments to anyone, on either side of the Wingspread political divide, Levy wrote: "It is my practice ... to meet with citizens concerned with Second Dis-

trict and county issues, and I do not subject them to an ideological straitjacket.

"I believe it is valuable to listen and learn from those on both sides of the issues that come before me. I do not regard it as appropriate for anyone — whether Friends of Porter-Sesnon or a developer — to try to dictate whom I should meet with."

Noting that the county Planning Commission is set to hold hearings on the Wingspread proposal next month, Levy said she would continue to remain publicly neutral on Wingspread until after the commission completes its deliberations and the matter is heard before the Board of Supervisors.

"I do not make commitments to anyone in advance, and that applies equally to the developer, as well as to Friends of Porter-Sesnon," she wrote.