

Development of Deer Park moving along

By BUD O'BRIEN

The Carl N. Swenson Co., a San Jose contracting firm, will be the developer of the shopping center that is planned for the Deer Park acreage in Rio del Mar.

Bob Marani, head of Community Research Institute of Aptos, which holds an option on the property involved, told directors of the Rio del Mar Improvement Association Monday night that his organization and Swenson had entered into an agreement for development of the property.

Marani called the agreement with Swenson the culmination of 2½ years of effort to plan a development on the Deer Park property that would meet with the approval of the people of Rio del Mar and county planning regulations and still be able to provide enough opportunity for profit to attract investors.

Marani said he was sure, with the entrance of Swenson into the picture, all these elements would be satisfied.

Marani said the agreement provides for the architectural firm of Ellmore-Titus to serve as project architects. Ellmore has been associated with Marani in the project almost since its inception, and his firm has drawn up all the preliminary plans that led

to "conceptual approval" of the plans by the county.

Cliff Swenson, president of the construction company that will develop the shopping center, was present at Monday night's meeting, and assured the directors that, while he has some changes in detail in mind in the preliminary plans, he would not deviate from the concept that has been approved by the community. He added that any changes his firm wished to make would be discussed with groups like the improvement association.

In answer to questions from the directors, Swenson said he does not anticipate any difficulty in getting tenants for the center. He said he is already negotiating for leases with such businesses as a bank, a pharmacy, a savings and loan institute, a grocery market, and others.

Swenson said Deer Park restaurant, a landmark between Santa Cruz and Watsonville for many years, will be included in his development and that "we will be looking for" new operators. He said it probably will remain at its present site but will undergo considerable renovation.

However, Marani said the orchard behind the restaurant is not included in the development and will remain an orchard

under the care of Community Research Institute.

Swenson said he could not say when construction of the project will start, but he said all the necessary preliminary work to gain final county approval is underway and construction will start as soon as such approval is obtained.

The Carl N. Swenson Co. has done considerable construction work in Santa Cruz County over the years, including building the Palomar Hotel in Santa Cruz and Dominican and Watsonville hospitals, and the improvement association directors made it clear they were happy that the company is involved in the long-debated Deer Park development.

The directors also approved a proposed ordinance Monday night that would provide for the protection of the long-toed salamander, which is found only in Santa Cruz County and is on the endangered species list.

One of its habitats in the county is a lagoon between the freeway and the hills of Rio del Mar and the ordinance is designed to protect the salamander from being blocked in its usual migrations by homebuilding.

The county already has certain restrictions on home building in the area involved, but they have been criticized as too onerous and the proposed new ordinance was drawn up to answer those criticisms.

The directors agreed that the new restrictions were reasonable, except for one which calls for a fee for property owners who come up with "special designs."

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