

Panel urges Skypark development

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SANTA CRUZ — Lest anyone think the city would do nothing with a 26-acre chunk of valuable city-owned real estate, the Skypark Airport Committee has recommended the city make clear its intention to develop the now vacant site of the former airport.

The committee — comprised of Councilmembers Arnold Levine, Spiro Mellis and Michael Rotkin — has no specific recommendations on what should be developed there, but "urges the city clearly express its intent to develop the property so there will be no misunderstanding about that," said City Manager Richard Wilson in a report to the Council.

The site of the former airport, located on an island of city-owned land at the edge of the Scotts Valley city limits — is valued at more than \$7 million.

The airport was closed on Dec. 31, 1982 after a political dispute that pitted pilots against residents who felt the airport was a safety and noise nuisance.

The committee believes the development should be "in full cooperation" with the City of Scotts Valley, said Wilson.

Scotts Valley Mayor Ray Carl said Tuesday is comes as no surprise that Santa Cruz officials plan to develop the potentially-lucrative slice of real estate.

"We've expected it all along," said Carl.

But the Scotts Valley mayor believes it would be "to everyone's advantage for the property to first be annexed to Scotts Valley before it development.

The Skypark land lies adjacent to the Scotts Valley Police Department and city offices. Also water and sewer services for any development would be provided from that city, said Carl.

There are some tricky questions to be answered before development can take place.

The City of Santa Cruz annexed the Skypark property for an airport under a provision of state law that allows municipi-

palities to own islands of land beyond their boundaries for public facilities such as airports, golf courses and dumps.

But what happens if Santa Cruz officials want to develop the property into another use, such as a housing subdivision or shopping center, or decide to lease the land?

"I don't know," answered Pat McCormick, executive director of the Local Agency Formation Commission, whose job it is to oversee annexations.

"The easiest scenario I can see would be for the land to be annexed to Scotts Valley. But whether the city (of Santa Cruz) takes the easy way remains to be seen," said McCormick.

It is clear under the law, said McCormick, that if the land were sold, it would have to be de-annexed from Santa Cruz.

There is another problem. A recent appellate court ruling means the City of Scotts Valley cannot annex any property until its "sphere of influence" map is completed. That map will determine the future boundaries of the city.

State officials have given LAFCO a deadline of Jan. 1, 1985 to complete the map.

"I think we're going to make it," said McCormick.

He estimated public hearings on the map should begin in late fall.

In the meantime, the Skypark committee has recommended the Santa Cruz Council adopt policies to allow the use of the property "for broad public purposes of limited frequency and duration."