

Aptos skating set back

Polo grounds skate park rejected

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SANTA CRUZ — Residents living near the Polo Grounds Park in Aptos will not have to worry about having a skateboard facility at the park. The Santa Cruz County Parks Commission agreed Monday night the facility is too isolated, and should be built either at the Aptos Park behind Aptos Village, or The Farm, which borders the communities of Aptos and Soquel.

Commissioners did not take any testimony during their discussion because Commissioner Tim Jenkins made it clear from the beginning the skateboard facility will go elsewhere if it's built at all.

"Skateboarding is a \$450 million industry," Jenkins told his colleagues, "yet skateboarding is unfairly categorized (as a sport for) drugies, gang members and generally bad people."

He suggested the county's first skateboard facility be placed in a 10,000 square foot area in Aptos Park. "The need is great," he said. "Many more should be built."

Jenkins and Aptos Commissioner Jeanel Montero spent time during the past two months looking

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over a number of possible sites and also visiting existing facilities located inside the city of Santa Cruz. Both agreed the Polo Grounds site was too remote.

Montero brought the issue to the commission, saying there was no place for youngsters to skateboard in the community because they were being barred from shopping centers and other public places. She originally suggested the Polo Grounds as a good site.

Commissioner Michael Rosenberg of Live Oak pushed to have The Farm, the site of an old restaurant which has yet to be developed as a park site, be used for the first park. The site also contains a low income housing project.

Commissioners agreed the project could move forward more quickly at Aptos Park because the Farm site is still several years away from development.

"Parking is not a strong point" for Aptos Park, Parks Director Barry Samuel said. South County Commissioner Vic Marani told his colleagues if the skateboard facility is

built at the Farm site, the development costs would be absorbed by the redevelopment agency. Samuel said there is money from developer fees to cover the costs of building the facility at Aptos Park.

To make sure the 10 residents that showed up for the discussion could take the official word back to their neighbors, the commission unanimously voted to reject the Polo Grounds as the site for the first skateboard park.

Samuel is to report back in October with a recommendation on a specific location of the skateboard facility.

On another front, the commission was told that park properties are being rented out at below market rates and the department could be losing as much as \$10,000 a year in revenue. Marani and Montero have been spending time looking into areas where additional money can be found to offset the costs of a number of programs.

Montero estimated that rents charged by the department for houses they own are renting at 10 to 15 percent under market rates. Both commissioners are in the property management business.

The two commissioners said two

parcels are currently being used at Pinto Lake Park in Watsonville for agricultural use. Marani said if the leases were coordinated so they came due at the same time, the county could rent the two parcels together for more money than they currently get from lessees.

Marani said Pinto Lake Park needs to have personnel on duty earlier in the day because numerous people enter the park without paying fees.

The program outlined from the two commissioners also included suggestions that concessionaires be found to run concessions at the county's more popular parks, similar to the program currently underway at Seacliff State Beach. They also suggested the county use Greyhound Rock Park on the North Coast as a possible site for an R.V. Park. (Studies have shown during the summer time as many as 100 R.V.s park at various points along the coast north of Santa Cruz without paying any fees).

The two commissioners are to return next month with specific suggestions on ways of developing income-producing operations in county-owned facilities.