

VCF WINGSPREAD 1/24/89 RP

Wingspread foes have a few ideas of their own

By KATHARINE BALL
STAFF WRITER

About 30 Wingspread opponents grappled last night with a problem set for them by state Sen. Henry Mello: how Santa Cruz County can come up with some cash to help buy the land near New Brighton State Beach, and what to do with it after it's purchased.

Mello threw down the gauntlet to the Board of Supervisors Friday, telling them if he is going to go to the trouble of

getting state parks money set aside for the purchase of the 66-acre seaside bluff, the county had better show it is sincerely interested in the purchase by coughing up a little of its own cash.

Mello has said he would try to come up with the lion's share of an unofficially estimated purchase price of \$8 million to \$10 million, from state parks funds and the Coastal Conservancy.

But the county could have to come up with as much as \$1 million to seal the deal, he

indicated.

Last night's gathering at the Aptos Library, sponsored by the Aptos Neighbors Association and an anti-Wingspread group called New Brighton Beach Action Coalition, produced a few useful ideas and a lot of wishful thinking.

One man suggested the county form a special assessment district into which residents would pay a tax to preserve the Wingspread site, Polo Grounds, Pogonip and other areas as open space.

Others in attendance, most of whom live near Porter Sesnon, the Wingspread site, said they simply wanted the field to remain as it is, one way or another.

But most of the people at the meeting conceded that if the state did buy the property, it will probably be made an extension of the adjacent New Brighton State Beach campground.

Amid a host of uses suggested for the property last night, a

performing arts complex was not mentioned. Soccer and baseball fields were also denounced by several members of the audience.

Both uses were supposed to be major selling points for the Wingspread hotel complex when it was put before county voters last June — and soundly defeated.

The group of about 30 people indicated an "environmental interpretive center" would be the most welcome use at the site. Such a center would offer

wildlife and nature tours of the property.

Some disillusionment with the idea set in when audience members realized such a center would probably attract hordes of school buses carting in children from the Santa Clara Valley for field trips.

Audience members also conceded that such a center might be hard to fund and maintain.

The overall resolution of the evening was that lovers of the

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Wingspread property should strongly pressure the Board of Supervisors to acquire it, by hook or by crook.

Some people suggested that Palo Alto developer Ryland Kelley, who owns the development option on the property, should also be pressured, to make sure he will sell if the state and county can come up with enough cash.

One person even suggested that Kelley, who has fought for nine years to build a hotel on

the parcel, might be persuaded to donate the property as a park, if it were named after him.