

Capitola plans to buy mansion

Council hopes to convert Rispin estate to city library

By BOB SMITH
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Capitola is going ahead with plans to buy the historic Rispin Mansion and convert it into an 8,000-square-foot library.

In the meantime, plans by developer Howard Dysle to subdivide the mansion grounds into 14 single-family-home building sites, have been shelved for the next 90 days.

Dysle agreed Thursday to the City Council postponing a public hearing on his subdivision application and environmental impact report (EIR).

The City Council Thursday unanimously authorized City Manager Steve Burrell to spend about \$5,000 to have the property appraised — the first step towards purchasing the mansion and the 6.5 acres of surrounding property. Burrell was also authorized to begin negotiating with the property owner, Emmett Rittenhouse of Santa Cruz, and Howard Dysle, who now has an option on the land.

The council paid \$5,000 for architects Higgins & Root, Ellmore Titus and a structural engineering firm to examine the possibility of restoring the three-story, concrete-shell building and then using it as a library or for another public use.

Architect Steven Elmore summed up the specialists' findings in a letter last week to Burrell: "All considered at this preliminary and structural portion of the feasibility analysis, we feel the structure and grounds warrant a renovation and adaptive re-use project for the City of Capitola."

Burrell, however, warned the Council Thursday in a memo, that the total cost of buying the property and then restoring so that it would be safely used by the public might cost upwards of \$3 million.

The City Council has been viewing the mansion acquisition and restoration as an alternative to a request by City-County Library Director Anne Turner that the city help construct a 17,000-square-foot library that would serve Capitola, Soquel and Live Oak. The council, as part of the Capitola

Redevelopment Agency agreement with the County Board of Supervisors agreed several years ago to build an 8,000 square feet regional library in the Capitola Mall area. Turner last spring met with a cool response from City Councilmembers when asked that the building be enlarged to 17,000 square feet.

The idea of the city purchasing the Rispin Mansion and using the building as a library came from Mayor Michael Routh.

But Turner pointed out this morning that Capitola officials have never asked either the library staff or the library board about the mansion's suitability as a library.

"I've no comment," she said, when asked about the council's action, "because no one has asked library staff or the board to comment on whether we regard the Rispin property as a suitable library."

The preliminary site plan prepared by Elmore showed that upwards of 40 cars could be parked on the mansion grounds to the south of building "with little or no disruption to the overall feeling of the mansion," Burrell told the council. "The 40 cars would allow about 8,000 square feet of the building to be used. This is probably about what would be possible and would meet the city's parking requirements based on the 8,000 square feet and 40 car parking. It would be possible to include more if that was necessary, but that would depend on the use that the building was put to."

Elmore said the mansion's concrete shell is in remarkably good shape.

A structural engineer's report "indicates that the overall structural integrity of the cast-in-place concrete walls is quite good and exceeds even today's standards for lateral earthquake resistance," Elmore said. "The structure was very well built and the walls are in good condition."

But extensive rebuilding and upgrading of the wooden roof and floor joints would be required, the engineering report indicated.

REFERENCE

1985-1989
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1985-1989