

Rotkin Does Not Plan To Re-Kindle Sky Park Issue

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The proposed closing of Sky Park Airport in Scotts Valley by the city of Santa Cruz will be a "breach of a trust agreement," according to the city Airport Commission.

In a letter from Commission Chairman David A. Landino, the commission has recommended the council rescind its action and adopt the master plan of improvements for the airport.

But Mayor Michael Rotkin says he doesn't plan to bring the issue back to the council.

In the letter to Rotkin and councilmembers, Landino says the commission's investigation shows the city purchased Sky Park in 1962 with funds from the Aviation Trust Fund.

The trust fund was created in 1956 from sale of parcels that were purchased in the Swanton area for an airport that never got off the ground.

The Swanton purchases were made possible by agreement of the city and Chamber of Commerce which mutually set up the non-profit Santa Cruz Memorial Association to raise money and buy lands for an airport.

Association members invested \$17,500 to buy parcels in the Swanton tract and also worked to persuade and pressure landowners along the north coast to donate or sell low so the city could have its own airport.

The Swanton site was abandoned in 1953 when the California Aeronautics Commission advised the city that Sky Park, then a private airport, together

with Capitola-Santa Cruz Airport and Watsonville Airport were sufficient to its needs.

The city then sold its holdings, put some of the money into buying the industrial park on the west side, some land that became Natural Bridges State Park and overall came out on the plus side of the Swanton purchases by \$190,000 to \$200,000, according to the Airport Commission's study.

Some of the money was put into the Aviation Trust Fund and by 1962, there was \$120,000 in that fund. Sky Park was purchased that year for \$197,000 with \$77,000 coming from the general fund.

Considering that the city had made money on the Swanton purchases, the Airport Commission feels that "virtually the entire purchase price of

Sky Park Airport thus came from sale of the Swanton Tract property."

On April 13, the City Council voted 5-2 to close the small plane airport in the middle of Scotts Valley at the end of this year.

The basis of the council's action was the safety issue and those voting it to close were Councilmembers John Laird, Joseph Ghio, Mardi Wormhoudt, Bruce Van Allen and Rotkin.

The Airport Commission also has recommended that if the existing airport has to be closed, then the city should take the proceeds and buy another airport somewhere in north county and that Sky Park be kept open until the new one is ready.

Rotkin said this morning that he has

no plans to bring the issue back before the council.

"I read the report and I don't think it has anything surprising. It shows that the city in the past has supported an airport.

"Matters would be different if the Scotts Valley area airport could be made safe, but in the long run, I don't believe it can be made safe.

"The airport always remained a recreational facility and it didn't create the jobs it was supposed to," Rotkin said.

He added, however, that some members of the council are interested in helping develop an airport in north county if there is sufficient support among a coalition of groups and organizations to make it feasible.