

Fate of Aptos golf lodge up to Coastal Commission

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A long-running controversy over plans to build a 101-unit lodge on the Aptos Seascope golf course moved out of the hands of Santa Cruz County supervisors and into those of the California Coastal Commission yesterday.

Seascope Corp., hoping to sidestep the county permit process, has asked the Coastal Commission to acknowledge its right to build the lodge without further restriction from the county. If the commission confirms the claim, Seascope would be free to build the lodge without securing a local coastal zone permit from the county.

Seascope's move to the Coastal Commission is the latest turn in a 17-year campaign to build the lodge on the golf course. The corporation first submitted the application in 1968 — a time when county land-use regulations for the property were less strict and the 1976 State Coastal Act had not yet placed all Seascope land in the local coastal zone.

In 1974, Seascope won a Superior Court ruling that gave it a "vested right" to build the lodge according to land-use regulations in effect in 1970.

The supervisors yesterday were scheduled to consider extending Seascope's design review permit for one year and granting the project a local coastal zone permit — a permit made necessary by the 1976 State Coastal Act, passed two years after the Superior Court ruling.

The board, instead, voted to postpone the items until March 4 to let the issue sort itself out. The Coastal Commission is scheduled to consider the matter in the meantime; and the commission may limit the county's ability to act on the project by ruling no local coastal zone permit is necessary.

According to Edward Brown, Coastal Commission district director, the key issue in the matter is whether the 1974 Superior Court ruling, which was directed at the county government, binds the state agency.

The supervisors yesterday also approved a schedule for hearings on Wingspread Plan A and Plan B, two proposals to build a conference center on the Porter Sesnon property in Aptos.

Their first hearing will be from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. next Tuesday in the supervisors' chambers.

The supervisors have set aside up to one hour each for (1) a staff report, (2) a presentation by the applicant, Conference Associates, a division of the Palo Alto development firm of Hare, Brewer and Kelley, and (3) a presentation by Friends of Porter Sesnon, a coalition formed to oppose the Wingspread projects. Any remaining time will be used for public testimony.

At the request of Supervisor Robley Levy, whose district includes the Porter Sesnon property, the second hearing, scheduled for 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Feb. 4, will be held somewhere in Aptos, probably at Aptos High School. The first part of that meeting will be set aside for organized groups supporting and opposing the Wingspread plans. These groups might include the Wingspread Arts Foundation, whose members hope to benefit from the performing arts center proposed in Wingspread Plan B, or neighbors of the Porter Sesnon property who oppose such a big development so close to home.

The supervisors have also set aside Feb. 11 to hold another hearing if necessary to finish hearing public testimony.