

County told to find money for Wingspread

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State Sen. Henry Mello told the Santa Cruz County supervisors yesterday they would have to find some local cash to put toward the purchase of the Wingspread site, and that they would have to show energy and enthusiasm for the project if they wanted to keep his good will.

The 72 acres by New Brighton State Beach where developer Ryland Kelley wanted to build the Wingspread hotel-performing arts complex is now a candidate to become part of the state parks system.

But, Mello said, it is going to take far more than the \$3.9 million the state currently has earmarked for purchase of the property.

Without making any firm estimate, Mello indicated the property might cost as much as \$10 million.

He said the state parks department and Wingspread developer Ryland Kelley were trying to agree on a fair price now.

Kelley's higher appraisal comes from what he estimates the value of the property would be if it were developed with a 132-unit hotel, Mello said.

Current zoning would allow a hotel of that size, if Kelley could get the necessary county and Coastal Commission permits to build it. The proposed Wingspread project that was shot down by county voters last June was much larger.

Mello suggested the supervisors find some way to raise local money to turn part of the site into a neighborhood park.

He also mentioned the county might want to find its own funds to build a performing arts center there.

Mello said he was also asking the Coastal Conservancy for funds.

Mello also said he wanted to see more enthusiasm on the supervisors' part for his work to acquire the Wingspread site.

"I have not previously had uniform support from the board to go forward," Mello said.

Until election day (June 7) of last year, the board was split 3-2 in favor of developing the Wingspread hotel. But when Supervisor Robley Levy found herself dragged into a runoff race to keep her seat, because of her support of Wingspread, she was the first to suggest, on June 8, that the county get the state to buy the property.

Dan Forbus, who also sup-

ported Wingspread, was voted off the board in November. Jan Beautz, his successor, has said she supports the county's buying of the property.

Mello pointed out that it was through his efforts that \$3.9 million in park bond money has been reserved since 1982 for the purchase of the Porter Sesnon property near New Brighton State Beach.

But Mello will have to do some fancy legislative work to get that cash back in a reserved account for next year. Currently, in the governor's budget, the sum has simply been put back into the parks pot for any property the state might want to buy.

That means the county can count on that money being available for the Porter Sesnon purchase only until June 30 of this year.

Mello said he would not be able to get another "roll-over" of the \$3.9 million unless he could show his colleagues in the Legislature that the rest of the purchase price was available from somewhere else.

"By June or late May I have to be in a position (to show the legislators) where the other \$5 million to \$6 million is coming from," Mello said. "Other

areas want the \$4 million if it's not used here."

Mello also said he wanted to be sure that Kelley was negotiating in good faith and really meant to sell the property if the state comes up with enough money.

"If the owner will not agree to some sort of price by (June), I'm going to say forget about it," Mello said.

Mello also criticized the supervisors for appointing a Porter Sesnon task force without giving the group much to do.

"We need someone who can help scrounge up money," Mello said. "You have to do more than just appoint people to a task force if you want to see this piece purchased."

Mello said developer Kelley might be willing to donate six acres of the Porter Sesnon site he owns outright, in consideration of a tax break. The remaining 66 acres is owned by the University of California, which has leased the property to Kelley for 99 years. Kelley would actually be selling his lease, not the land itself.

Mello made his remarks at an annual luncheon meeting the supervisors hold with Mello and state Assemblyman Sam Farr.