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Community park plan gets panel's blessing

APTOS — Plans for a community park on the 72-acre Wingspread site have been given the blessing of the county Parks Commission.

The Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services Commission Monday night voted 3-2 to recommend a change in the general plan designation of the site, located across Highway 1 from Cabrillo College. They want the plan to show the site as a community park, rather than the existing designation of a regional park, according to a Parks Department spokesman.

The commission's recommendation says nothing about the developers' proposal for a development of 295 hotel units, a convention center, and a performing arts facility along with the community park. That is one of two proposals the developer has made to the county, the other being smaller and devoid of any parks or performing arts facilities. While not supporting either proposal directly, the commission vote gives an indirect boost to the larger proposal.

According to the Parks Department spokesman, a regional designation means

the state or county would have to purchase park land, while a community designation means the developer would be required to dedicate park land for public use.

Commissioners, however, want the developer — Conference Associates — to do more for the public than the firm is proposing.

They are recommending a sports facility to cover 10 acres, instead of the developer's proposal to donate seven acres to a community group for playing fields. They want three junior-size soccer fields, something the developer isn't proposing.

Commissioners also want the developer to be required to dedicate six to 10 acres of land for development of a park and to either install lights at the Wingspread sports facility or install lights at some other recreational field in Aptos.

The commissioners' recommendations will go to the Planning Commission and eventually to the Board of Supervisors when these two bodies consider the Wingspread proposal.