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Wharf Road Project Advances

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Capitola planning commissioners for a time Thursday night acted like auctioneers as 10, 13 and 15 units per acre were thrown out for future land use designations in a proposed Wharf Road Village development.

But the commission eventually adopted all the numbers by passing a general plan amendment for medium density residential use (10 to 15 units per acre) for the property.

However, the existing regional shopping land use designation was retained on about one acre of the 8½-acre parcel — that area immediately fronting the property along 41st Avenue.

The parcel is located between 41st Avenue and Wharf Road, south of Highway 1. Applicants Irish Properties of San Jose were requesting a change to high density residential that would have been the first step toward a proposed 160 townhouse development.

As it is now, the medium density designation would allow between 75 and 113 (units on the 7½-acre residential portion of the property. The recommendation will be passed on to the City Council.

Planning Director Dick Steele said the council will hold a public hearing in late March or early April on the project.

Traffic congestion in the 41st Avenue-Highway 1 area was a primary concern of the commission.

Commissioner Jerry White questioned the suitability of residential development on the parcel. He also cited noise and the impacts to schools and both police and fire

protection in the city.

White suggested alternative land uses, such as light industry or warehouse designations. Commission Chairman Howard Dysle pointed out such proposed developments in the past "that have been shot down by neighbors."

He explained that residents in the adjacent mobile home park have repeatedly come out in favor of residential development.

Dysle's argument apparently swayed White. Unlike other commissioners, though, who came out in support of a medium density, White supported a lower density.

Commissioner Craig Rowell gave credence to White's light industrial designation by saying the property may be better suited for such.

It is hoped future traffic improvements will occur through the proposed redevelopment project.

Commissioner Al Wilder pointed out that such improvements were neither on paper or approved by the council yet. "Even if they were approved, they would be several years away," he said.

Dysle added that he didn't see the project getting "off the ground" unless improvements are made, such as the widening to four lanes of 41st Avenue over Highway 1.

While Commissioner Dennis Norton had preferred low density residential, but he made the motion for medium density since the lower designation "may not be feasible" for the developers.

Jim Sims, developer for Irish Properties, stated at a hearing two weeks ago that 17 units per acre would be economically feasible. Fifteen units per acre is the highest allowed in the medium density designation.