VCF WINGSPREAD 12/11/87 rP

Wingspread foes outraged over commission ruling

By KATHARINE BALL
STAFF WRITER

The California Coastal Commission will consider whether to approve the controversial Wingspread project in February.

The commission granted a request from Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors Chairman Robley Levy to hold a hearing on the project as soon as possible, because the county wants to put the project up for voter approval in June. The deadline for June ballot measures is March 1.

But the commissioners denied a request to hold the hearing in San Francisco, where local residents could have easily attended it. Instead, the commissioners will hold their February meeting as scheduled in Marina del Rey, near Los Angeles.

The decision outraged local opponents of the project, who said they couldn't all afford to travel to Southern California to testify against the project.

Levy sought the February hearing with a 3-2 vote of approval from the supervisors, to make sure the 468-unit hotel-condominium project with performing arts center makes it on to the June ballot. Gary Patton and Joe Cucchiara, who oppose Wingspread, also opposed hastening its hearing process if that meant local residents would have a reduced chance to participate.

Patton said county residents would be "disenfranchised" if the hearing were held in Southern California.

"(This is) an action that would make it impossible for anyone to testify unless they are wealthy," Patton said last week.

The March meeting of the Coastal Commission will be held in San Francisco.

Coastal Commission staff workers had said they might not have time to assess the impact of the Wingspread project on Santa Cruz County's Local Coastal Plan before the February meeting.

"We asked for a continuance to March, to allow us time to make a recommendation and to allow for maximum public participation," said Les Strnad, a commission staff worker. "Holding the hearing in February will certainly diminish the amount of public participation, but we will do what we can."