

Santa Cruz approves hotel expansion

Hotels & Boarding Houses
Close vote moves project ahead after long debate, public input

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After hours of heated debate and public input, the Santa Cruz City Council voted early Wednesday morning to move ahead with a new 270-room hotel at 175 W. Cliff Drive.

The 4-3 vote signified approval of an environmental impact report and agreement on plans to demolish the existing 163-room Coast Hotel and develop on the site a \$100 million hotel with four wings,

including a restaurant, conference center and six-level parking garage.

The Santa Cruz Redevelopment Agency will spend \$30 million on the project under development with Northwest Hospitality Group of Boise, Idaho. After two years of construction, the hotel is expected to generate \$2.7 million annually.

City Council member Ryan Coonerty voted in favor of the project, but added several motions, reducing its size by 7.5 percent and requiring continued work on

the design to make it more consistent with Santa Cruz-style architecture.

The council negotiated as many as 100 changes to the plan, Coonerty said.

"What it came down to for me was that overall it was a good project for the city. It fits within our values — not only the city's budget, but its impact on local businesses," Coonerty said.

Although some local residents had

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demanding that the council "slow growth or say no" and many had called for a public vote on the project, Coonerty said that after more than 10 hours of public comment, six hours of council debate and hours of individual meetings with constituents, a vote was due.

"We're elected officials and we have a responsibility to make these decisions," he said.

Council members Emily Reilly,

Ed Porter and Tim Fitzmaurice voted against the project. Some council members criticized the size of the project and thought there had not been enough public comment. Others raised questions about the potential effect on Santa Cruz if the conference center fails.

Hundreds of residents spent two nights last week commenting on the plan, with many union members and local business owners supporting the hotel expansion. The new hotel is expected to add approximately 30 winter jobs and 45 summer jobs to the 75-150 work-

ers at the existing hotel.

Many opposed the hotel for its expected impact on neighboring Clearview Court, increased traffic, unwieldy parking structure and overall design.

The Planning Commission approved the plan in December, but recommended the city address the height of the parking structure, redesign a planned pedestrian bridge and change the overall design to give it "more of a Santa Cruz flavor."

The expansion project now goes to the California Coastal Commission for a final vote.



Santa Cruz City Council approved a plan to demolish the Coast Hotel on West Cliff Drive to make way for a new hotel, conference center and parking structure on West Cliff Drive near the Municipal Wharf.

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