

County could throw Wingspread to voters

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SANTA CRUZ — When the gavel bangs down in the Aptos High School auditorium Tuesday night, bringing the Board of Supervisors' fourth hearing on Ryland Kelley's Wingspread project to a close, spectators could be left wondering exactly what the board decided on the Palo Alto developer's proposal.

Supporters and opponents of Kelley's controversial Wingspread Plan B, which calls for construction of 295 subdividable condominium units, a conference center, three-hall performing arts complex and athletics fields on the 66-acre Porter-Sesnon property in Aptos, are gearing for a climactic vote on the project. But there's some speculation now that supervisors may do the unexpected and, in effect, vote both yes and no on Wingspread.

Under this scenario, the board would tentatively approve Kelley's plans, but leave final approval of Wingspread to the voters.

Confirmation that such a scheme is under serious consideration could not be obtained Thursday, but south county Supervisor E. Wayne Moore Jr., who said he supports the Wingspread development, said he would agree to such a plan if that was the only way to gain board approval for the project.

Second District Supervisor Robley Levy, thought by many to hold the swing vote on Wingspread, said she's given no thought to the idea.

"I have heard the talk (about the ballot measure plan)," said Moore. "It's an idea that, under certain circumstances, I would be willing to consider.

"If we couldn't get Plan B approved, which I pretty much support, maybe a compromise could be reached with whoever the critical vote might be to put it on the ballot."

The Pajaro Valley supervisor said he would prefer "to get it over with, with an up-or-down vote Tuesday night."

Asked Thursday afternoon if she had considered passing the Wingspread buck to voters, Levy said curtly, "I have not particularly thought about that. At this point, I wouldn't speculate on what the board is going to do."

While Levy wouldn't speculate about the upcoming board vote, the advantage of the ballot measure scenario is fueling speculation that she might turn to such a plan to wriggle out from between a political rock and a hard place.

The Porter-Sesnon property is in Levy's district and her constituency is polarized on the Wingspread issue. No matter how she votes on Wingspread, the supervisor is likely to anger as many people as she pleases.

A vote to approve the project, with a proviso that voters must also approve it before it could be built, would, in at least some measure, enable Levy to satisfy both supporters and opponents of Wingspread.

If approval of Wingspread appears likely Tuesday night, that scenario might also prove appealing to Supervisors Gary Patton and Joe Cucciarra — generally believed to oppose Plan B — as a way of stalling a final decision and giving Wingspread opponents a chance to fight another day.