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Report affects decision

Should study of Laguna be cited now or later?

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For the first time ever, the report from the Laguna Advisory Committee made an effect on the outcome of a decision by Sebastopol's Planning Commission.

Palm Terrace, a planned subdivision between Palm and Walker avenues, was the subject of a public hearing when the planning commission met at its regular meeting Tuesday.

Developer George Young sought environmental approval for three lots on the east side of his project, adjacent to the Laguna de Santa Rosa. Previously, the same lots had been approved on an earlier, 80-lot subdivision at the site. But now Palm Terrace was at odds with a new environmental precedent.

"The Laguna Report was the cause of our not getting the negative declaration," Young said. A negative declaration on a project means it has no adverse effect on the environment.

Young cited what he believed was a contradiction in the Laguna Report. On one page of the study, the committee calls for "a strong policy of no development below the 76-foot flood plain." However, on another page, the study calls for "no net fill."

The difference in the two terms is the difference between an approved subdivision or a denial of the application.

"This project serves to focus the importance and give practical substance to the Laguna Report," said Commissioner Rudy Seidler.

But commissioners disagreed whether the report should be cited at all, since it was not leagally adopted by city council.

City Manager Melvin Davis, however, said that even though the study was not official, the

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environmental concerns expressed in the study still must be taken into account when making an environmental consideration on the site. Davis also acts as the city's environmental coordinator.

Planning commission voted 3-2 in favor of continuing the issue until March 22, with Chairman Don Davis and Commissioner Jimmie Apodaca voting in the minority. Both said they would have supported a negative declaration for the lots in question.

"It should have been approved tonight," Davis said.