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SEBASTOPOL

Laguna a priority over SR golf course

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SEBASTOPOL — Santa Rosa city officials went courting Tuesday night, seeking a willing partner in the Sebastopol City Council in a proposal to build an 18-hole golf course on the very edge of Laguna de Santa Rosa.

Although the overture was received cordially by all but one member of the Sebastopol council, at the end of the presentation it was clear that no golf course will be built off Highway 12 between the two cities until the sanctity of the laguna wetlands is assured.

"The Laguna de Santa Rosa is a precious natural resource that must be preserved," Bill Haigwood, president of the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation, told the council.

Haigwood said the foundation,



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active in efforts to create a laguna wetlands park, has not yet taken a position on the Santa Rosa proposal. But he urged the council to explore the plan fully before it begins to make a decision.

Santa Rosa is considering construction of a golf course on a portion of a 318-acre farmland parcel Santa Rosa bought in the 1970s for disposal of treated wastewater. About 180 acres would be devoted to the golf course and the remainder of the farmland closest to the laguna would be left alone to return to a natural state.

Ed Brauner, assistant Santa Rosa city manager, said the city wants the new golf course to relieve pressure off the crowded Bennett Valley municipal course.

He acknowledged the proposed site is near the prized laguna wetlands area and that, for that reason, the Santa Rosa council has not yet moved forward on the project before obtaining the bless-

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ings of the larger community.

"We would want to involve the neighbors, the environmental community and the golfers," he said. "We would want to get the city of Sebastopol involved because (the site) is closer to your city limits than it is to our city limits."

Reaction in the audience was mixed although it seemed to tip in favor of the proposal. Golfers said there's a need for additional golf courses, especially municipal courses with affordable green fees.

But even golfers expressed con-

cern for taking care of the laguna and others opposed the plan, saying it was not appropriate for the wetlands area and is inconsistent with regional plans for the region.

And one member of the council, Anne Magnie, went on the record clearly opposed to the plan and said it would represent one more step toward the laguna's ruin.

"Eventually there will be no more laguna anywhere, and that's why I'm not at all interested in this discussion. I'd just as soon Santa Rosa take this off their back burner and extinguish it," she said.

The rest of the council, however, received the information without judgment, thanked Brauner for the considerations, and committed themselves to remain active in the discussion.