

February 17 - March 2,  
1994

94.5.1

## Planners reject Laguna project ↘

It wasn't as close as the vote. In their summary comments shortly before taking action on a motion to recommend denial of the proposed Palm Terrace subdivision, all seven members of the Sebastopol Planning Commission expressed reservations about the project. So their subsequent 4-3 vote to carry that motion appeared to hinge on whether or not each commissioner felt the project could be modified into a form they could support.

As it is now proposed, Palm Terrace would cluster 19 homes, six of them with smaller second units above detached garages, on just over seven acres overlooking the Laguna de Santa Rosa at the eastern end of Palm Drive, a little beyond Palm Drive Hospital. A strip of the property closest to the Laguna and an overlook at the southern end would be dedicated to public use, and the six "granny units" could be used as rental units to provide some affordable-housing stock, according to the developers.

That claim was disputed by several commissioners, who openly doubted that the units would ever be placed on the rental market, but other questions were equally troublesome. The subdivision's close proximity to the hospital places it beneath the flight path for emergency helicopters, exposing the homes to both noise and the risk of an accident, it was noted, while its position overlooking the Laguna creates an unmitigatable visual impact from the waterway. Commissioners also expressed concerns about the extent to which the land would be paved, the impacts that pets, pesticides, and other aspects of human presence would have on wildlife in the Laguna, as well as the lack of public support for the project.

The entire matter now goes before the City Council, which will hold its own hearing on the project. That date has not yet been announced.

—Bruce Robinson