

Ball rolling on Jackson project

Seaside: \$50,000 deposit opens talks with city

By ANDRE BRISCOE
Herald Staff Writer
Monterey County Herald

Article Last Updated: 08/18/2007 01:32:52 AM PDT

Former baseball slugger Reggie Jackson emerged from a recent meeting at Seaside City Hall and handed Sara Isgur his autograph — on a check, in the amount of \$50,000.

Isgur is the city's redevelopment project director and the money was a deposit for an exclusive negotiating agreement that gives Jackson's development team, Amador Hotel 44, one year to hammer out a final agreement with the city and its redevelopment agency to build a 252-room hotel and conference center on 5.7 acres at Canyon Del Rey and Del Monte boulevards.

The deposit will be used to pay for legal and consulting costs connected with finalizing the right to develop the property. It was delivered moments after the City Council approved an exclusive negotiating agreement for the project Thursday.

During the meeting, Jackson, a 30-year Monterey Peninsula resident, talked about his familiarity with and appreciation of the city, his plans for the project and the city's future. Jackson told the packed hall that, once completed, he hopes the hotel will benefit local residents.

"I knew I was in line to be part of redevelopment, and I was either going to do something about it and participate or at least go find out and understand what was about to happen," said Jackson, 61.

"I thought if I came and engaged and talked about being able to participate, talked about friends I knew throughout the country, tried to understand what was necessary ... that I could put a team together that would bring value, add value and be able to enrich lives. I've felt very comfortable with the community."

The agreement will give Jackson's group time to refine the hotel design, submit a project proposal to the city, negotiate terms and complete environmental studies, according to a staff report. The agreement allows for an extension of up to nine months if the environmental review process is not finished within the 12-month period.

It will also give Jackson's group time to purchase all the land needed to build the hotel. There are about two dozen properties on the 5.7-acre site, including four major property holders.

Jackson owns a 20,000-square-foot piece at the site; Cederwall Diamond Trust of San Francisco owns 18,000 square feet; the Marvin and Donna Shaffer Trust owns 17,000 square feet; and Bethel Missionary Baptist Church owns four parcels on Elm Avenue.

After the meeting, Jackson said he had not talked to all the property owners but said they would be contacted long before the agreement expires. It calls for the redevelopment agency to work in partnership with Jackson's team, if necessary, to acquire the needed property.

"For any project, any developer has the right to ask us for assistance if there is a holdout," said Isgur. "But that would be a last resort and it would only occur if they asked us for help."

Such help would come in the form of a "resolution of necessity," she said, which could lead to acquiring the property using eminent domain.

During his presentation to the council, Jackson said he would be looking for an experienced construction firm to build the project.

Former Councilman Darryl Choates challenged the agreement, saying Jackson should already have a builder on board.

"This is the document that starts the entire process," he said. "How can you approve this document when you don't know the team that you will be dealing with? Don't give us somebody blind, give us somebody that really wants to do this project and get it up for us."

Choates continued: "It concerns me that Mr. Jackson is titled as a managing member, which means that he is not a principal party to this entire document, which means he might just be an investor, which means that we don't know what he is, he might just be a name figure. We want to deal with the principal partners of this project so we can know who to hold accountable."

City Manager Ray Corpuz assured Choates that Jackson would lead the project.

Construction of the hotel and conference center would require people in 17 homes, four businesses and the church to relocate.

Andre Briscoe can be reached at 646-4436 or abriscoe@montereyherald.com.

Close Window

Send To Printer