



Morning clouds

High of 81 at the coast, 98 inland. C8

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# Coastal panel OKs Hueneme homes plan

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SAN PEDRO — The California Coastal Commission said yes on Wednesday to a controversial housing development in Port Hueneme, defying the recommendation of its own planners and making the Port Hueneme residents in the crowd very happy.

About 65 people from Port Hueneme came to Wednesday's commission meeting in San Pedro, all of them to urge approval of a plan by John Laing Homes to build 150 homes on a property on Hueneme Road. Laing Homes fought for a year over the property with the Oxnard Harbor District, which wanted a vehicle storage yard there for the Port of Hueneme.

But last month, the Harbor District's board decided to give up its designs on the property and look for another place to store vehicles. In doing so, it abandoned its opposition to the Laing Homes project.

After a three-hour discussion Wednesday afternoon, the Coastal

See COMMISSION on A6



The housing project will have 86 town homes and 64 houses, nine of which will be donated to the city of Port Hueneme for its low-income housing programs.

## Coastal land to be homes site

### COMMISSION

From A1

Commission voted 7-2 to allow the Laing Homes property to be rezoned from industrial to residential. The commission's staff had recommended a no vote, citing a state law that gives preference to "coastal-related uses," such as port warehouses, near the coast.

"I put great weight on the Harbor District's withdrawal of interest in this property," Coastal Commission member Larry Clark said shortly before the vote.

The Laing Homes project will have 64 houses, 86 town homes, and a park dedicated to the Chumash Indians. Nine of the homes will be donated to the city of Port Hueneme for its low-income housing programs.

The 17-acre site is near Hueneme Road and Surfside Drive. There are houses as well as industrial businesses in the area, and many of the nearby residents support the Laing Homes plan because they don't want any more industry in the neighborhood.

"We care deeply about our community,

and we want our community to keep its seaside residential character," said Barbara Burnett, a resident of the Anacapa Beach Homes complex in Port Hueneme.

Burnett was one of three Port Hueneme residents to address the Coastal Commission. They spoke on behalf of more than 50 people who had volunteered to speak.

"This isn't a win for John Laing Homes, it's a win for the community," Laing Homes President Bill Rattazzi said shortly after the commission's vote. "There are 65 people who gave up their day and chose to come here."

Rattazzi's company got its approvals from the Port Hueneme City Council more than a year ago, but because the property is in the coastal zone, the project had to go before the Coastal Commission.

For most of the past year, Laing Homes has fought with the Oxnard Harbor District over the property. Before its recent change of heart, the district discussed taking the property through eminent domain.

The reversal swayed a few members of the Coastal Commission, but its staff still recommended against approving the Laing

Homes plan. Even if the Harbor District doesn't want the land, another business might, the planners said.

"We don't know what the future holds," Coastal Commission Deputy Director Jack Ainsworth said. "There may be other types of imports we're not even thinking of. I think it's very short-sighted for the port district to say we don't need this land."

Sarah Wan and a few other commission members said they were disappointed that no one from the Harbor District was there to answer their questions.

"My great concern here is that we're setting ourselves up, if we approve this, for a problem in the future," Wan said. "We are setting ourselves up for the port district coming to us and saying, 'We have to have space,' and maybe this time it's space in a wetland."

Clark said that without a proposal on the table from the Harbor District, it was "sheer speculation" to assume the property would be used by the Port of Hueneme or industrial businesses.

"What is real is the housing needs of the city of Port Hueneme," he said.