

Council pours praise for recycled w



SUSAN CALDWELL

Some argued the irrigation plans were unsafe.

City still must convince cinema developers to alter their plans now

BY JOSH WEIN
Staff Writer

REDWOOD CITY — A ceasefire was formally declared Monday in the largest water fight this city has seen since drought hit the state more than a decade ago.

Faced with the daunting task of cutting the city's overdraw from the Hetch Hetchy Water System amid fervent opposition to the use of reclaimed,

treated wastewater on landscaping, the council-appointed Recycled Water Task Force came up with what city officials hail as the perfect plan for water consumption, and the blueprint for future community interaction.

When the council unanimously approved the task force's recommendations, which include resurfacing playing fields at four local parks with synthetic turf and adding recycled water pipelines to the downtown cinema project, the gathered audience in City Hall

burst into applause.

"It's very emotional," said Safe-water Coalition founder Christina Lai, who led the opposition to the city's recycled water plan more than two years ago.

Lai, who shed a few tears during her speech to the council, was just one of a long line of residents, city officials and task force members who congratulated all involved on a job well done. Spirits were so high, it inspired one resident, watching the meeting on television, to rush down to City Hall and congratulate the council himself while offering

Saturday, March 27, 2004

ater plan

some of his own suggestions for water conservation.

But although the seven-month task force process, which pitted nine recycled water advocates against nine opponents on a 20-member panel that included two neutral members, has finally drawn to a close, some questions remain about how easily the recommendations can be put into place.

Chief among the concerns is the task force's plan to fit the downtown cinema project with recycled water for irrigation

WATER: page 5A

WATER: Deal is struck

Continued from 1A

purposes. With excavation for the underground garage well underway, the city will need to make quick work of convincing developer David Irmer to make those changes to the building's design.

While time is clearly tight, Councilmember Jim Hartnett said that anything is possible.

"Where there is a will, there is a way," Hartnett said. "And here there certainly is a will."

But changing the building plans now to incorporate the task force's proposal would certainly delay the project, which has already overcome its share of hurdles.

City Manager Ed Everett said his staff could return to council with a recommendation on the cinema option by the second week in April.

Such a stumbling block is

of little concern to task force members, who were praised by the council for overcoming the divisive spirit that characterized the recycled water debate in the past while reaching a workable solution that satisfies both parties.

Redwood City, like all Peninsula cities, draws the bulk of its water from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. The city currently takes more than 1,000 acre-feet per year in excess of its allowance.

The city developed a plan two years ago at an estimated cost of approximately \$43 million that would reduce the city's take by nearly 2,000 acre-feet per year.

The task force's solution is projected to cost \$14,000 more than the city's initial plan.

E-mail: jwein@smindependent.com