

Levy, Builders Suggest Changes In The County's Permit Process

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Two proposals which are designed to help builders who are locked into the current building permit system, but can't obtain financing, were announced this morning by county Supervisor's Chairman Robley Levy.

Flanked by representatives of the building industry, Levy this morning announced she is sponsoring a proposal which would allow builders to switch places in the county building permit list and give them a six-month extension for building if interest rates are 14 percent or higher.

The proposed changes will go before the full Board of Supervisors for consideration Tuesday.

Today's high interest rates are raising havoc with the county's building permit allocation system, according to Levy.

Builders who are waiting in line for building permits are finding they are losing their places when they are delayed in getting financing from lending institutions.

And once they are awarded one of the limited number of building permits under Measure J, home builders are finding their permits are expiring before they can get financing to build.

Levy said her proposal is designed to combat some of these built-in problems in the building permit allocation system.

Under the present system, a builder is awarded an allocation for a building permit in a yearly lottery. Once he receives an allocation, he is given a place on the waiting list for his building permit.

But the holder of a building allocation isn't allowed to switch places in line with other persons who are not within the same year's allocation list. If a builder can't get financing, he may not be able to keep his place unless he agrees to being put on the bottom of the list.

Levy is proposing to change the list from its current year-by-year system to a continuous numbering system. This change, Levy said, would allow builders to know exactly where they are in line, regardless of the year their allocation was issued.

It also would allow a builder who is experiencing delays and is high on the list to switch places with someone who's ready to build and who's lower on the list, developer Hal Shores said during today's press conference.

Levy worked with representatives of the building community to come up with the proposed changes and two of these representatives — Shores and Steve Mills of Integrated Land Services — attended the press conference.

Levy also is suggesting that when interest rates are 14 percent or higher, the county grant builders six-month extensions on the time they have to exercise their building permits.

Currently, if a builder doesn't begin construction within six months of being given his building permit, he loses the permit.

Levy said these proposed changes won't accelerate growth beyond the rate established by Measure J.