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Santa Cruz Growth Management Board To Be Formed

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The city of Santa Cruz will get a new advisory board and a new set of planning jargon to buttress its efforts to convert the dictates of Measure O into a workable growth management plan.

In a study session with the city Planning Commission Tuesday, the Santa Cruz City Council agreed in principle to the formation of a nine-member Advisory Review Board to screen projects bidding for residential allocation permits.

Almost instantly, the review board became known as ARB and the permit became known as RAP.

The proposal for ARB and RAP was made by Peter Katzlberger, Santa Cruz planner, as a means of establishing a workable method for controlling city growth until the year 1990 by regulating the number of homes that can be built.

Under Measure O, population growth is set either at 1.4 percent a year or at the state's annual growth rate, whichever is larger.

Katzlberger noted there is no way the city can control population itself and so, he said, "we clearly must translate Measure O in terms of something else. Housing units we can control and we can reach for that as a goal."

Mayor John Mahaney said at the outset, "This proposal is all geared to limiting population growth by the number of housing units. Why not limit the number of bedrooms, the number of children? The law says we are going to control the population, but legally is that going to stand up in court?"

Neal Anderson, associate city attorney, told the City Council and Planning Commission: "Measure O is an amendment to the general plan and must be implemented. One method of implementation is being proposed."

Katzlberger noted the city figures there are 2.3 persons per dwelling unit, and that figure is being used to arrive at the number of dwelling units to permit to be built on average each year.

Anderson said, additionally: "Generally the courts uphold city growth control methods if there is a rational basis for it."

The ARB, in its screening of applications for RAPs, will be guided by criteria developed to meet housing needs, design quality and relationship to the existing neighborhood as well as community service and environmental impact.

In a first study of the criteria the council made a number of suggestions for improvements and the criteria will be refined, Katzlberger said, for submission for final approval.

As conceived, the growth control plan is based upon an annual decision by the City Council on the number of dwelling units to be built in each year. Then three times yearly the ARB will screen bids from developers. In the screening a point system would be used to denote the success of the proposed project in meeting the criteria.

A big "Catch 22" is that Measure O also mandates that 15 percent of houses or dwelling units constructed each year be affordable to persons with average or below average income.

These units would be sub-

tracted from the number of units to be built for the general market, and proposals for such units would have top priority in the process.

In 1980, the proposal tentatively sets the city's housing target at 295 new units. That means that 50 single family homes will go up on lots of record (without need for review), that 25 units will be in small projects, 176 units in large projects, and 44 units for average or below average income people.

This year, from March through December, the target was put at 225 and there are 270 units available for permits, or

45 more than can be accommodated.

The proposal requires that only projects containing five or more units would be subject to the RAP process. Lots of record for single-family construction and projects with four or less units are exempted.

Councilman Larry Edler came down scathingly on the criteria proposed for evaluation of large projects. Much of these are subjective, he said, and he warned: "If ever there was a potential Tammany Hall situation, it is here. Without criteria that are measurable you are leaving the decision on a project to a group of people

who could vote one way or the other, depending on who is elected to office.

Councilman Bert Muhly noted at one point on the subject of affordable housing, "The city can show it has the land and housing programs to prove it is interested in carrying out the Measure O mandate. But state and federal housing project money may not be available. If this occurs and we cannot move ahead on low-income housing I am sure we can show in court beyond any question of doubt that the council is trying to implement Measure O."

The "greenbelt" aspects of

Measure O also came into discussion and there were rumblings from some councilmen when Katzlberger reported:

"We are proposing the creation of a Greenbelt Overlay Zone in which land uses compatible with open space uses may be allowed."

Katzlberger reasoned that the purpose and intent of the greenbelt portion of Measure O is flexible enough to allow some compatible uses. If that is so, he went on, then provision of some services to these compatible uses would be permissible.

Muhly said he would hope that this would be only an in-

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terim approach to the Councilman Michael Rotkin Greenbelt issue because some said in response to Greenbelt uses could be damaging in an "flexibility": "The voters were area of steep slopes. He said he pretty clear they want no de-hoped the Greenbelt issue velopment there. I know there would be approached ultimate- are open-space legal problems ly through application of vari- but we should get what the ous elements of the city general voters want without running afoul of the law."

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