

'Mansion' exempted from wrecking ban

By KEN McLAUGHLIN

Because of an oversight at City Hall, the City Council yesterday was forced to eliminate an obstacle to a wrecker's ball aimed at the historic Mansion House.

After realtor Marty Sglav complained that he had not been dealt with fairly after he applied for a demolition permit, the council voted to exempt the Mansion House from the 60-day moratorium on the issuance of building and demolition permits in the downtown redevelopment area.

Sglav applied for the permit on May 31 and one day later the City Council imposed the 60-day moratorium. Sglav was supposed to have been informed that the city staff intended to recommend that the moratorium be imposed. But he never was notified.

"It totally slipped my mind," said Planning Director Bob Ellenwood, who had been instructed by City Manager James Buell to notify Sglav.

Ellenwood apologized to the council for the mistake.

Councilman Frank Osmer quickly moved that Sglav be exempted from the moratorium because "of the manner in which he was treated."

The city, he said, must remain "purer than Caesar's wife" in its dealings with the public.

Responded Mayor Bill Johnston, laughing: "Before you go on Frank, how pure was Caesar's wife? I never met her?"

Osmer said he didn't want to give a history lesson, but assured the mayor that the emperor's wife was "pure."

The councilman commented that he was "totally sorry for Bob Ellenwood," but he contended that the city had been placed in a "defensive position."

But council members Rex Clark and Charles Palmtag didn't agree that the city was required to exempt the Mansion House from the moratorium.

Palmtag commented that the moratorium probably would have been imposed whether Sglav had been notified or not.

Clark agreed, saying that he didn't see any reason the 60-day moratorium would place a hardship on Sglav.

Clark and Palmtag dissented when the vote came to exempt the Mansion House.

Sglav did not say yesterday when he intends to demolish the 108-year-old

structure. But he did say that the building would be "economically unfeasible" to rehabilitate.

One reason the council voted to impose the moratorium two weeks ago was to give the city attorney time to draw up an historical preservation ordinance. City Attorney Don Haile said yesterday that the ordinance would be ready by the next council meeting.

Also exempted from the ban on permits in the downtown were homes being rehabilitated under the city's housing rehabilitation program.

"Waiting for the 60-day moratorium to expire would create a hardship for the owners of these properties in that construction will have to be delayed, and construction costs will be that much higher," explained community development coordinator Meanlie Freitas, in requesting the exemption for the housing program.

Palmtag, however, objected to the exemption for the city-run program. He said he didn't know why "what's good for the goose is not good for the gander."

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