

Board limits use of land for trailers

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SANTA CRUZ — The first 50 emergency mobile homes for families left homeless by the Oct. 17 earthquake will be installed at the county's property behind the county annex on Freedom Boulevard, the Board of Supervisors decided Tuesday.

But before agreeing to donate land for the temporary emergency mobile home park, the supervisors made a list of 10 conditions for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's use of the land.

While some supervisors said they were worried the conditions might delay FEMA's opening of the park, Supervisor Gary Patton said the county would be unwise to give the land without basic assurances — in writing and in advance — that the trailer park would be set up and managed properly, and closed within 1½ years.

If federal and state officials aren't tied down by a contract, Patton said, "it will be like water evaporating on a hot day — they'll be gone and we'll be stuck with this mobile-home park."

Patton said he was happy to see people move fast on providing emergency services and housing. But he said fast shouldn't mean hurried and half-baked. After the first phase of a disaster passes, he said, officials in faraway places often forget about the ongoing complications of the disaster.

He said he was worried that the site would

become one big "mud pool" if gravel or pavement isn't laid down before the rainy season comes. And he said he foresaw the park still living on at the site five years down the road if a deadline for closure wasn't in writing.

Mindful that FEMA didn't want to send the mobile homes in the first place, Supervisor Fred Keeley said he didn't want the list to turn into a roadblock for speedy delivery of the homes.

As a compromise, the supervisors agreed to have county staff present the list to federal and state officials, and sort out what points might cause problems. "Then we can make an informed decision about whether to hang tough," Keeley said.

Bill Johnston, former mayor of Watsonville, led a delegation of residents of Independence Square, an apartment building for physically disabled people. Johnston said the residents would be disturbed by the traffic and noise created by 50 families in the instant neighborhood.

There were also complaints from other neighbors of the site, who appeared before the Watsonville City Council Tuesday evening.

But the City Council backed the location of the park, and noted that it had been chosen by a county-wide emergency housing task force.

Bulldozers could begin grading the land as early as today, staff members told the supervisors. Site preparation is to be done by Caltrans, and the property will be managed

by the state Housing and Community Development Department.

The supervisors said they want FEMA and state agency to agree to: lay sod on a small open area so children will have a place to play; put a fence around the park for security; provide "on-site management" to be landlords of the park; lay pavement or gravel on the park's roads and parking spaces; provide two parking spaces per unit; take away trailer coaches as families find permanent housing and move out; provide laundry facilities; and close the site by April 30, 1991.

The supervisors also said they want to leave space on the edge of the park for the Madison Avenue sidewalk to be widened by two feet to make it more accessible to disabled people who live in nearby Independence Square.

Finally, the board said it will reserve the right to have the county Planning Director approve of the park's design.

FEMA is planning to send at least 100, and as many as 150, trailers to Santa Cruz County for emergency housing. The trailers are being trucked up from Texas and are being stored at Ford Ord until acceptable mobile home parks can be prepared.

Luther Perry, who is heading the county-wide task force on emergency housing, told the board the task force is still studying possible sites for the rest of the mobile-home parks.

He said they started with a list of more than 40 possible sites and narrowed it down to 10 this week.