

Beach Street Revival Revival on Beach Street?

Nostalgia cruise may return to Santa Cruz roots

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SANTA CRUZ — The Beach Street Revival wants to cruise back to Santa Cruz, four years after it left in a huff for Watsonville.

Revival promoter Rick Petersen filed an application earlier this month with the city to bring the event back Sept. 24, 25, and 26. Petersen said the revival is also seeking non-profit status as a charitable organization.

The '50s and '60s car-oriented nostalgia event started in Santa Cruz in 1977 and grew into a yearly production that attracted thousands each September to car shows, dances and a

cruise along Beach Street.

It packed up and moved to the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds in Watsonville after a 1989 city ordinance mandated the reimbursement of city costs for special events in the city. Santa Cruz billed for police overtime and audited attendance.

The departure became a symbol of a perceived anti-business attitude in Santa Cruz.

"Watsonville was very good to us," Petersen said, "but most of the people like the idea of being in Santa Cruz." The county surroundings did not have the charm of Santa Cruz, he said.

Petersen said he is planning a "Main Street Revival" for Watsonville sometime next year.

The move to Watsonville was "purely political," Petersen said in 1990 as he planned the first South County revival. "Who knows, if the political climate in Santa Cruz changes some day, maybe we'll be back there some day," he said at the time.

Petersen is optimistic attitudes have changed. "My attitude has changed, their attitude has changed," he said.

An initial meeting has been held already with representatives of city departments, including police, fire, public works, parking, parks and recreation. Another planning meeting is scheduled Jan. 13.

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Dan Coyro/Sentinel file

Revival promoter Rick Petersen with Jenni Huff in 1989.

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"We have to take a long, hard look at it given what has happened in the past," said Jerry Ochoa, a Santa Cruz Fire Department captain, in charge of administering the city's special-events policy.

Special events used to be handled by the Police Department. That responsibility shifted to the Fire Department in July after city budget cuts.

Ochoa said Petersen's application calls for essentially the same event as in the past. That would entail a car show on the benchlands of San Lorenzo Park, between the County Government Center and the San Lorenzo River, a dance and a cruise along Beach Street.

"We need to evaluate how we can accommodate them," Ochoa said. "I look forward to Beach Street coming back."

Petersen said he hopes for a slightly smaller event for the first year back in Santa Cruz. "We're not here to overwhelm services," he said.

He estimated the event would bring \$875,000 in revenue for local businesses and \$87,000 in tax revenue.

The Santa Cruz Area Chamber of Commerce is a co-sponsor, ac-

cording to Petersen. The Santa Cruz Seaside Co. is participating in discussions with the planning group. The company's Riverside Avenue parking lot could be used for the car show if the group is unsuccessful at getting the benchlands.

Money will remain a critical issue. Santa Cruz charges a commercial use fee of 20 percent of gross revenue for beach events, 10 percent in city parks. It also levies a 5 percent admission tax.

But security is where the problems arose before, and where they could arise again. The combination of cars, alcohol and a party atmosphere left police with their hands full.

The event was charged about \$6,000 for police time in 1988. The 1989 revival was charged more than \$14,000 in 1989, although the City Council knocked \$5,000 off the fee.

In Watsonville, Beach Street paid \$700 or \$800 for increased police during its cruise on Main Street, Petersen said.

Santa Cruz Deputy Police Chief Jeff Locke said the department is not opposed to the event. "Anyone putting on an event should have to pay their way to ensure it is conducted in a safe and sane manner," he said.