

Low-income seniors get a reprieve from county supervisors

SANTA CRUZ — Pleas about the plight of low-income seniors living in mobile home parks prompted county supervisors to delay any decision on charging park residents fees when they appeal rent hikes to the Mobile Home Commission.

But, the board approved fees charged to park owners who want special rent increases and residents who appeal rent decisions to the Board of Supervisors.

Under the county's mobile home rent control ordinance, park residents can appeal rent increases to the Mobile Home Commission. Any decision by the commission is binding, but can be appealed to the Board of Supervisors.

Presently, there's no fee for appealing the rent hike to the commission. A \$175 fee was proposed.

Supervisors Tuesday unanimously agreed to pass the matter to the commission for a recommendation. Commissioners will take up the matter when they meet Thursday at 9:30 a.m. in room 525 of the County Center.

While they delayed any action on this proposed fee, supervisors unanimously approved two other rent appeal fees. Park owners who ask for special rent increases and park residents who appeal a commission decision to the Board of Supervisors will now be charged.

Under the county ordinance, park owners are allowed only one rent increase a year. If they want to increase rents more than once in a year, they can petition the commission for special rent hike.

Such a petition now will cost \$350 plus \$1 for every space in the park.

Park residents now will be charged \$150 for any appeal of a commission decision to the Board of Supervisors.

Supervisors particularly want the commission to look into how the proposed fee for appeals to the commission could be levied so it won't have an inequitable effect on small parks.

Al Rowe of the Seniors Council told supervisors the proposed fee would hurt small parks much deeper than it would hurt large parks.

Supervisor Gary Patton at first pushed for a decision on the appeal fee, moving that the fee be returned to park residents and charged to the park owner if the residents win their appeal.

Patton said the fee is designed to prevent park residents from frivolously appealing all rent increases. He also said the proposed fee doesn't even cover the county's \$302 cost for each appeal.

But Rowe argued against any fee, saying low-income seniors "aren't doing

this for frivolous reasons. For them, a few dollars means an awful lot If they have to put up \$175, it will take them a long time to raise that. It is ludicrous to call this justice."

In other matters before the board Tuesday:

•Supervisors want the Planning Commission to consider repealing the O'Neil Ranch Specific Plan. This plan, approved by a former Board of Supervisors in 1980, shows how developer H.C. Perry might develop the 100 acres in Soquel with 225 housing units on a portion of the site.

Supervisor E. Wayne Moore Jr. opposed sending the plan to the commission for

possible repeal.

•Consideration of whether the county should protest Monterey County's plan to build a dam in this county on Pescadero Creek was continued one week.

•Supervisors reviewed and then sent to the Local Agency Formation Commission, a proposal that would eliminate the allocation of city property taxes to the county Sheriff's Department.

•In a unanimous vote, supervisors approved the development of 17 townhouses at the northwest corner of Paul Minnie Avenue and Rodriguez Street in Live Oak.

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