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Many questions, no answers to village parking woes

By CANDACE ATKINS
Is it more discouraging to drive around Capitola Village in an unsuccessful search for a parking space, or to find a number of available slots — each with a 50-cent per-hour meter?
In a public hearing held last week at city hall, Capitola City Council members considered another in the long line of proposed solutions to the parking and traffic prob-

lems in the village area. The latest suggestions include 300 proposed parking meters in the village.
Parking problems have long beset Capitola Village, and the situation has become worse in the last 10 years. There have been a number of committees formed to study the matter and offer suggestions, but so far, there has been no action on a permanent solution

to the problem of too many cars and too few parking spaces.
No decision was made at the hearing. In fact, Mayor Ron Graves brought loud applause from the 50-member audience when he told councilmen late in the meeting, "I really think we're going to do nothing (about parking). Is this just another study group that isn't going to do anything? All I've heard is

dialogue."
Council members, after Graves remark, directed city manager Steve Burrell to outline the suggestions offered at the hearing, and present them at the regular council meeting held Thursday. Burrell's work sheet, as approved by the Council Thursday night, included: The availability of grants from any and all sources; the number of parking

spaces, according to the Coastal Commission, that are now needed in the village; consideration of purchasing Pacific Cove Mobile Home Park and its implications; beautification of the village area using funds derived from parking meters; operational costs of the various alternatives, and further study on the negative impacts of the parking meters.
Burrell told the council

he would probably report back in four weeks.
Most of the people who addressed council members felt parking meters in the village would be "a necessary evil." The meters, many said, would be the only dependable way to raise money to buy a parking lot or finance other transportation, such as a light rail system or year-round shuttle busses.
Former council

member Carin Mudgett suggested the city investigate the possibility of buying the Pacific Cove mobile home park property (located behind city hall) to use for a parking lot — an idea considered briefly by city staff members in the late 1970s.
She stressed that residents should be allowed to stay in the park, should her suggestion be accepted. Space for

parking could come from rearrangement of coaches or through resident attrition, she said.
"It would be open all year and all night," she said. "Let's see whether it can fly. It's a good long term solution."
Almost everyone, including council members, agreed with Mrs. Mudgett. All were careful to insist that present residents not be evicted.
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Parking

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should the city purchase the property.
Mrs. Mudgett is part of the Mayor's Select Committee on Village Parking.
The committee formally presented three ideas to council members, including a five year plan to collect \$100 per year from merchants through a business license surcharge. The money would be used to buy 300 parking meters that would be installed in

the village area bounded by Depot Hill, the Southern Pacific railroad tracks and Wharf Road-Cliff Drive.
The meters would be set at two-hour limits, with 50-cents per hour charged. Revenue would be \$548,000 a year if all meters were in use ten hours a day, seven days a week. A 60-percent use would gross \$329,000, according to Burrell. After maintenance costs were deducted, the meters, if used 60 percent of the time, would give the city about \$300,000 a

year to spend on other solutions to the parking problem.
Councilman Michael Routh wasn't convinced. "The whole tenor of this meeting depresses me," he said. "As a city councilman, I've fought for 10 years for (aesthetic) village preservation....I don't see how we can correlate parking meters with (requiring builders to use) wood sash windows."
Routh said that meters would destroy the "ambience" of the village.
"I have some real con-

cerns from an aesthetic, not an economic point," he said.
Routh agreed with Mrs. Mudgett's suggestion for the purchase of Pacific Cove, and said if parking meters are placed anywhere, they should be in that lot.
"I have real strong feelings about meters," he said. "I can't support them...they are 180-degrees away from this council's (original) intent (for Capitola village)."
Graves answered Routh at the subsequent Thurs-

day council meeting, saying he felt there was nothing less aesthetic than "the front, rear and sides of an automobile parked there all day."
Routh, like most people who attended the meeting, said a light rail system through the village was appealing, but the financial feasibility of such a venture is slight.
"I see it as a carrot dangled in front of us," he said. "We would be at the mercy of Southern Pacific."
Jack Darrough, a resi-

dent and retired employee of Southern Pacific, also wanted a rail system, but agreed the cost was too high.
"There is nothing I would be in favor of more than a 'Toonerville Trolley' for Capitola," he told council members.
Darrough said that he checked with Southern Pacific, and salaries for an engineer, conductor and brakeman would be \$3,100, \$2,900 and \$2,700 per month, respectively. In addition, the employees receive \$300 per

month in benefits.
While he supported Mrs. Mudgett's idea, Darrough was not in favor of parking meters in the village. He said the meters would be supported for three months by tourists and for the other nine by local residents who "the merchants make a living from." Darrough also fears that tourists would park in his neighborhood if there are meters in the downtown area.
"Maybe we could support a parking lot (purchase) through a bond

issue," he said. "But please, don't put meters in the village."
Graves told the audience that suggestions made by his committee are nothing more than suggestions. He said he will not asked city staff to "fully investigate" the ideas, including the potential of parking meters, until the city council gives him further direction.
"Give us suggestions so we can go back to work," he said the the council. "Where do you want us to go?"

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