

Village residents get break on parking fees

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In a turnabout from its position last month, the Capitola City Council last night slashed a proposed \$50 annual parking fee for Capitola Village residents.

The council will also consider in two weeks a major revision in proposed parking surcharges for merchants.

Council members voted for a \$10 parking fee for Village residents equal to that paid in the city's permit-parking neighborhoods. A \$15 additional fee would be charged for the option of parking in the lot planned on the site of the Pacific Cove mobile home park.

The parking fees were proposed in the first place to help finance conversion of Pacific Cove to alleviate the Village parking shortage. It cost the city \$1.5 million to purchase the lot and is expected to cost another \$250,000 to \$350,000 to construct.

"The whole key to this thing has been some mechanism to pay for what we're doing," Councilman Michael Routh said.

Relocation of Pacific Cove's residents is proceeding at a much faster pace than expected, City Manager Steve

Burrell said. The lot should be completed sometime during this summer's tourist season.

Proposed parking surcharges for merchants, ranging from \$125 to \$4,800 depending on gross receipts, would be drastically altered if the council approves a three-tiered surcharge system as suggested by Councilman Ron Graves.

Under Graves' proposal, merchants grossing less than \$150,000 would pay \$250, while those grossing more would pay \$500. Professional people such as real estate salesmen would pay \$75 each.

Numerous Village residents and merchants turned out last night to testify, but the public hearing was muted compared with last month's clash.

Hostilities were cooled partly by a new proposal presented at the start of the hearing by Nels Westman, chairman of the Village Advisory Committee that first drew up the fee plan.

The new plan called for \$10 and \$25 Village resident fees

and lowered the ceiling for merchant surcharges to \$3,000. Most testimony favored the revised resident fees, but the merchant surcharges continued to be assailed as too high.

"I really think it's a critical time for business, the little guy," said Wayne Hanson, of the Bandstand Restaurant.

His insurance jumped from \$1,000 to \$5,200 in just two years and pest-control service is increasing by 40 percent, he said.

Hanson and other merchants complained it was unfair to base the surcharge on gross receipts. A jeweler may gross

more money than many smaller shops, for example, yet generate less traffic and therefore contribute less to the parking problem.

Everyone in the Village contributes to the parking problem and should pay equally to alleviate it, Mayor Bob Bucher said. He suggested a \$200 Village merchant fee and a \$15 resident fee.

"Everybody's equal and everybody pays equal and that's the end of it," he said to applause from the audience.

Councilman Jerry Clarke disagreed. "Get rid of the large sliding-scale system," he said, "but perhaps go to the two or three tiers and keep them (fees) as low as possible."

The council directed staff to draw up a resolution to that effect for consideration at the Jan. 22 meeting.