

La Selva embroiled in feud

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A dispute over a parcourse that is disrupting a quiet corner of La Selva Beach won't be settled for at least two more weeks.

The controversy came before county Deputy Zoning Administrator Bob Leggett yesterday, but Leggett continued the hearing to Sept. 19 to obtain answers to questions raised in lengthy testimony on the issue.

The conflict erupted in July 1985 when the La Selva Beach Recreation District installed the parcourse — a series of explanatory signs and exercise equipment — along a narrow stretch of land between Asta and Arbolado drives.

Residents on the private roads objected to the brightly illustrated signs. Their strenuous objections led to the discovery that district personnel had improperly installed the course: They had failed to obtain required county permits and had also placed many of the signs in the public rights-of-way instead of on district property.

Once these improprieties were discovered, the district redesigned the course so that all the signs could be placed on district property, and then applied to the county for coastal zone and commercial development permits.

It was this application that Leggett considered yesterday.

A contingent of about 13 Asta and Arbolado neighbors, all wearing Kelly-green gift-wrapping bows, urged Leggett to deny the application.

Ed Meagher, of 22 Arbolado Drive, the first speaker, summarized the concerns of "Friends of Asta Arbolado."

He challenged county staff findings that the parcourse was compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with the county's land-use regulations. He called the signs "ugly" and the course an "unwarranted intrusion."

Meagher produced maps stuck with red and green pushpins indicating the signs that are on district property and those in public rights-of-way. The exhibit illustrated how poorly planned the project was, he said.

Not only was the course crowded, it also lacked toilets, parking and an adequate jog-

ging surface, Meagher said. He called it a "sea of mud" in the winter and a strip of potholes and loose stones in the summer. Poor maintenance had caused some of the equipment to rust, he said.

The result was an eyesore as well as a health and safety hazard, he said.

The course not only depreciated the value of property along the roads, but also made the neighbors vulnerable to burglars who would use the course to stake out homes, Meagher said.

Such complaints were repeated by several other speakers, all wearing the green bows. Meagher's wife, Colleen, noted the neighbors were also concerned about the environmental impact the parcourse would have on the wooded property. She said a botanist had said two endangered California native plants, a lily and a bottle brush, possibly grew on the course.

It was also possible the strip houses rare wildlife, she said.

"It's one of my pleasures to be a docent at Elkhorn Slough," she said, adding that as a docent she had learned that salamanders were an endangered species.

Salamanders, possibly rare ones, live on the parcourse, Mrs. Meagher said. To prove it, she handed over a peanut butter jar containing a salamander that had been trapped on the course.

Leggett inspected the desiccated creature and said, "It's pretty dead, that's for sure."

Mrs. Meagher asked that an environmental study be done on the property. It was partly in response to this demand that Leggett continued the hearing.

Chuck Schweikert, the county planner handling the issue, had recommended Leggett approve the application on several conditions. The conditions included lowering the five-foot signs to two-and-a-half feet and camouflaging them with landscaping.

David Brick, an attorney hired by the district just for the difficult parcourse controversy, said the conditions were reasonable and asked Leggett to approve the application.

A few residents of greater La Selva Beach had nice things to say about the parcourse.

"I feel this use of the property is the best I've ever seen," said 20-year resident Jay Green, of 311 Altivo Ave.

"I used the course," said Jerry Burke, of 3 Palma Ave. "I didn't feel inappropriate on it. I think residents that abut that piece of land, like beach owners in the past, want to have their cake and eat it, too. I think much has been made out of little here. I've never heard so much nonsense in my life."

REFEREN

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