

# Ordinance Anti-Bias Law goes back to public

## Anti-bias hearing set

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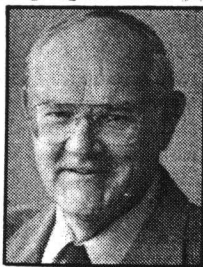
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SANTA CRUZ — City officials are preparing for another public hearing on a proposed ordinance that would ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation but would not protect individuals on the basis of personal appearance.

Community members will have the opportunity to give the City Council their opinions about the new ordinance during a 90-minute hearing April 28 at the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium.

Tuesday night the council approved a first reading of the revised ordinance by a 5-2 vote, with council members John Mahaney and Louis Rittenhouse objecting.

"I'm not for discrimination, but I don't feel we need this type of regulation," Mahaney said, requesting an estimate of how much the ordinance is going to cost the city.



**J. Mahaney**  
A 'no' vote

The ordinance now bans discrimination on the basis of age, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, disability, marital status, sex, gender, sexual orientation, height, weight or physical characteristics.

City attorney explained to the council Tuesday that a major definitional change between the current draft and the original proposal is use of the term "physical characteristics" in the place of "personal appearance." The appearance clause was adamantly opposed by individual business owners and the Chamber of Commerce who feared they would be forced to hire people, regardless of their grooming or clothing style.

The term "characteristics" refers to conditions from birth, accident or disease, or from any natural physical development or event outside the control of an individual, Barisone said.

Barisone said a religion clause has also been

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## Anti-bias ordinance

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changed so that a Christian school would be able to select a teacher on the basis of his or her Christian principles, and that a statute of limitations has been changed so that complaints can be filed within one year of the alleged act of discrimination.

Tuesday night the council added another clause exempting people looking for roommates to share housing, saying that people deserve the right to advertise for women, men or gays only.

Councilman Neal Coonerty, who wrote the original ordinance in January, was supportive of the revisions and said, "The city will function better if we are free from any discrimination of this type."

Coonerty also assailed critics who have questioned the amount of work the city has put into the ordinance.

"This did not detract nor take any time or energy from rebuilding downtown nor any other work," Coonerty said. "That is just a false argument."

The Santa Cruz Area Chamber of Commerce, which opposed the original proposal, passed a resolution this week that "questions the need for and the legality of

this ordinance," and raises concerns about "the economic vitality of the city."

Despite the doubts, Chamber President John Lisher said the group supports the new language and was pleased to participate in the revision process.

Other business owners and community members have also lifted their objections to the ordinance now that the appearance clause has been removed, but the congregation of the Christian Life Center remains opposed.

"By all means we are not hate-mongers, bigots or homophobics," Senior Pastor Ray Shelton said in a letter to the council. "To say that prejudice is non-existent would be simply untrue; however, our greater concern is that law, order and values be upheld for common good."

"We sincerely believe that God has given absolute truth and moral standards for the good of society," Shelton said.

Mayor Don Lane said speakers may be limited at the next hearing to comply with the time limit, and he urged anyone who is concerned about not being heard to send a letter to the council within the next few weeks.