

# Loophole found in rent-control ballot measure

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The mobile-home rent control measure that will appear on Watsonville's November ballot doesn't limit the amount park owners can raise the rent when a home is sold — which is exactly what park residents don't want.

In a written analysis of the measure, City Attorney Luis Hernandez said, "The restriction

Among their objections was a clause allowing park owners to raise rents up to 10 percent when a home is sold; the residents wanted no increase allowed, other than the amount permitted for all coaches in a park.

Residents then started their petition drive, and qualified their revised measure for the November ballot.

John Gilford, one of the leaders of the petition drive, said the

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—John Gilford, petition supporter

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on park owners' ability to adjust rents when a mobile home is sold or transferred by a homeowner to a new homeowner has been deleted."

In a brief interview this morning, Hernandez said, "Unless you expressly prohibit it, it's allowed."

Early this year, a group of mobile-home park residents started a petition drive to impose a rent-control law for mobile homes, which the city didn't have before.

The City Council then started discussing the issue, and the residents held off on their petition drive.

The council passed a rent-control law in April, but it wasn't quite what residents wanted.

proposed ordinance is a copy of the law already in effect in Capitola. "We didn't have time (to make changes)," Gilford said. "We accepted it carte blanche."

Gilford acknowledged that the proposed law isn't perfect in the eyes of mobile-home residents, but said it does afford some protection from rent increases when a home is sold. There is a procedure for mediating rent increases, he said.

If problems develop with park owners raising rents when a coach is sold, Gilford said, "We know the law can be amended."

The measure on the November ballot calls for a formula of computing rent increases that's more favorable to residents than the law the council passed in April.