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# Homeless Campground issue enters council race.

By MARK BERGSTROM  
Sentinel staff writer

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SANTA CRUZ — Fallout from the City Council's refusal to approve a temporary homeless campground is now showering down on progressive candidate Neal Coonerty.

The flak is the first in what has been an uncustomarily low-key City Council race.

Like progressive Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt and council members John Laird and Jane Yokoyama, who voted down the proposal, Coonerty does not support the idea of a campground at River Street and Highway 1.

That opposition has angered the Coalition for a Safe Place to Sleep, whose members are among the city's leading progressives and unaccustomed to being on the losing end of a council vote.

Celia Scott-Von der Muhll, for example, dashed off a sharply worded letter to Wormhoudt after the council vote.

"I felt a deep sense of shame, embarrassment, and horror watch-

ing you vote down the emergency campground proposal . . .," Scott-Von der Muhll wrote.

She concluded her letter saying, "After years of support from my family for your candidacies and public service, I am saddened to say that I am deeply insulted and disillusioned by your vote . . ."

Eleven members of the coalition met with Coonerty on Wednesday to see if the rift could be mended.

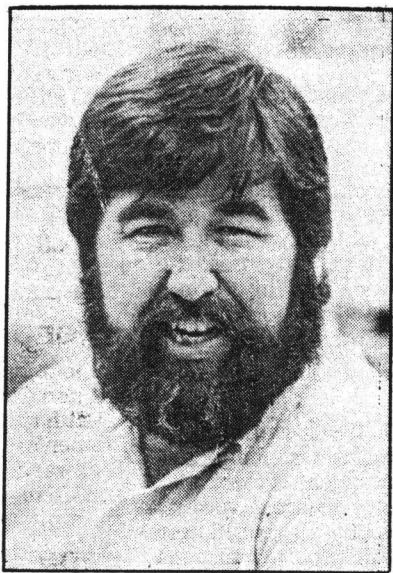
The meeting followed a warning to Coonerty from Councilman Don Lane, that Lane was troubled by Coonerty's position.

Lane and Katherine Beiers, who is running unopposed in November, voted for the proposal.

"I didn't say 'If you don't support the campground I won't support you,'" Lane told the Sentinel.

"I told him that I was in a difficult spot because I really support this. I told him it wouldn't make a lot of sense for me to boost his candidacy (as a result)," Lane said.

"It was not an ultimatum, but more of a political reality," Lane explained.



## Neal Coonerty

Stance may cost him support

Coonerty said after Wednesday's meeting that he did not back away from his opposition to the campground.

"We didn't end up agreeing but we got to talk about the issue," Coonerty said.

Coonerty said he thinks he and Lane have worked out a compromise.

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"I think the position he's settling into is that he will support me, but disapprove of my position on the campground," Coonerty said.

"Part of the debate at our meeting," Coonerty said, "was, will the campground issue split the liberal community?" Coonerty said.

"I guess election day will provide the answer," he said.

Wormhoudt said Wednesday that she does not believe that members of the Santa Cruz Action Network who support the campground will turn their backs on Coonerty.

SCAN voted 80-1 to support the campground proposal, but Wormhoudt feels the membership in general is more divided than that. SCAN previously had voted to support Coonerty in the council election.

"I don't think they will throw away a nine-year agenda over one issue," Wormhoudt said.

Wormhoudt sees the fallout from the issue differently.

"Very, frankly, I see the fallout on Scott (Kennedy) if the coalition continues to identify him with the

proposal," Wormhoudt said.

Kennedy, who supports the campground plan, is another City Council candidate endorsed by SCAN.

"Because of the letters and calls that have come in to me since the vote I do not get the sense that the proposal is widely supported in the community," Wormhoudt said.

Kennedy said he has been clearly in favor of a campground from the beginning.

"From the very first forum, I've articulated my support for a temporary campground both on substance and because it's the only process that's involved the homeless in actually formulating a constructive alternative," Kennedy said Thursday. "I haven't been waiting for the coalition to identify me with the issue," he said.

Kennedy said he has been campaigning door-to-door every afternoon and has encountered very few questions about the campground. "It has not emerged as a big issue," Kennedy said.

Anyway, he said, the campground is just one part of what he stands for. "I don't believe in single-issue politics," he said.