

Women Tell Panel About Brutal Side Of Life

The local mythology would have you believe that life in the city of Santa Cruz has a perfection not to be found elsewhere for as long as you will ever, ever live.

But real women residing in the city will tell you that life in the municipality can be terrifyingly harsh and brutal.

Some of those real women did exactly that Thursday evening at a public hearing held by the Commission for the Prevention of Violence Against Women.

They detailed their experiences with the horrors of rape, battering or other abuse either at home or out on the street. Some detailed disillusionment with the city police and local health care specialists, alleging

that the treatment accorded them after the crimes against their bodies had been committed was not invariably sympathetic or sensitive.

The commission was formed by the Santa Cruz City Council to develop a comprehensive plan for curbing crimes of violence against women. The hearing at the Nelson Center was to obtain testimony from women on the types of violences committed on them and their suggestions for programs to curb such crimes and/or to mitigate their effects upon victims.

Some 50 women attended the hearing.

"It was a very instructive hearing," said Commissioner Gillian Greensite:

She reported:

"There was concern for education programs in the schools to correct basic misconceptions on sex and self defense. Programs giving this information to the students should be part of the school curriculum, it was felt."

Another concern expressed involved better training for police and health care specialists in handling the victims of rape and batterings. There was a feeling that neither the police nor the medical personnel are as sensitive at those times as the victim needs them to be.

Others spoke about pornography in the city, even the need for escort service for women on request.

Still others said that the

training of police to deal with these matters needs to be on a continuous basis, "more than a one time thing."

The seven-member commission is responsible to the City Council to suggest programs and to work with

the police to provide essential aid to victims.

The commissioners have already been on "ride-alongs" with the police to observe their work in the field. The commission has also handled one complaint against the police on an

informal basis, in a mediation role.

But Greensite reports the commission feels it is now ready to develop programs to curb violence and to make certain that victims get the police and medical help they need in a way that

meets their emotional need.

The commission meets each Thursday at 7:30 p.m. in Room ABC in the Civic Auditorium. The public is invited to attend and to make suggestions during the oral communications period, Greensite said.