

Farmers Market debated

San Lorenzo Park site is proposed

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SANTA CRUZ — After the mayor threatened to continue the Farmers Market without them, members of the Downtown Association curtailed talk of abandoning the event and chose instead to move it to San Lorenzo Park.

The City Council must renew the association's annual permit to operate the market, which will give council members an opportunity to consider whether the park's benchlands would be an appropriate site.



Lisher

Merchants have criticized the market, which has been on Lincoln Street every Wednesday for more than two years, because of the social problems related to the transients that flock to the area.

As a result, the association was considering stopping the popular market.

But Mayor Mike Rotkin said Monday that he didn't believe the council would support that move, and if the association backed away then the city simply would get another sponsor and continue holding it downtown.

On Tuesday, members of the association's board of directors heeded the mayor's suggestion that the group would be better off continuing its sponsorship, but they were not pleased with his comments.

"That's paternalistic as hell to pat us on the heads and say, 'It's going to be there whether you like it or not,'" said board member John Lisher. "He's just one vote on the council. He doesn't have that kind of power."

Locating the Farmers Market at the benchlands in San Lorenzo Park had been discussed before. Members were concerned, however, that the winter rains would make the grassy area a mucky mess unsuitable for the year-round open-air market.

Parking and access also are problems, especially for farmers carting heavy cases to the market.

Rotkin said after the meeting that the council would seriously consider the association's proposal. The mayor did not rule out the benchlands, although he was concerned about access and the city's consideration of the site for a \$150,000 skateboard park.

Association members made it clear, however, that even if the council turns thumbs down on the benchlands site, the market would not continue in the Lincoln Street area after mid-July.

Embattled merchants in that area were promised that the market would be relocated, and the association leaders wanted to make sure that promise was honored.

Board member Jim Mullen said the park location was "perfect," despite his objections to having to make the move because of Rotkin's intention to "jam it down our throats, anyway."