

Capitola parking lot purchase to be studied

CAPITOLA — The “pie-in-the-sky” dream of the city to purchase a mobile home park for use as a parking lot in Capitola Village has moved forward to a special council meeting on June 30.

The City Council Thursday night scheduled the meeting and also directed City Manager Steve Burrell to enter into formal negotiations with the owners of 83-space Pacific Cove Mobile Home Park. The park is located behind City Hall and within walking distance of the village.

A large group of park residents — mostly seniors — also attended. They were repeatedly reassured by councilmen that even if conversion of the park were to take place, no residents would be displaced.

Resident Joe McCarthy testified that “everybody in the park is upset.” He reminded the council that three years ago they fought a successful battle for the park residents concerning rents that “kept the wolves away from the door.

“Now, all of a sudden, you’re the wolves,” he added.

Mayor Ron Graves replied that the city was simply “exploring the possibilities.” He said the plan was all “pie-in-the-sky” as far as he was concerned now.

According to Burrell, the city has received an appraisal for the mobile home park of \$1.1 million. If the land were vacant, appraiser’s set the value at \$1.3 million.

Park owners, meanwhile, have indicated the park is for sale at \$1.6 million. Burrell is to meet with owners between now and June 30 and “frame a more precise position concerning terms and conditions of a sale.”

A detailed list of 10 questions was presented to the council by Burrell — questions that would be reported on at the next meeting.

Among the biggest questions is how the city would finance such a purchase. Last February councilmen voted 3-2 to shoot down a controversial plan to install 300 parking meters

downtown. Revenue would have been used to purchase a parking lot to deal with the long-standing parking problem.

Since then, the council has formed a Parking Authority. It could operate similar to the city’s Redevelopment Agency in that it would be permitted to borrow money in its efforts.

Councilmen have also looked closely at instituting a new parking tax that could be imposed on businesses throughout the village.

Other questions include the timing of any possible transition, the status of park residents during the transition and after and legal issues and concerns.

The some 40 residents in attendance appeared sufficiently satisfied that the council wasn’t going to displace them in a sudden purchase and transition into a parking lot.

The June 30 special meeting will begin at 7 p.m. in the council chamber at City Hall. Pacific Cove will be the lone item on the agenda.