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County Planners Suggest 2.1 Percent Growth

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A growth rate of 2.1 percent which would allow county government to issue permits for 937 housing units in 1981 was recommended by the county Planning Commission Wednesday afternoon.

The rate, higher than the statewide projection of 1.5 percent but lower than the state Department of Finance 3.1 percent projected for this county, passed the commission on a 3-1 vote.

Voicing strong opposition was Commissioner Celia Von der Muhll-Scott who said that major water problems in the mid-county area should be taken into consideration in setting the rate.

She pushed for 1.5 percent, telling the commission, "There is an overdraft of groundwater right now (because) that area is overbuilt."

She also said that if the Soquel Creek County Water District has to declare a moratorium, it will push growth into the

other unincorporated areas of the county at a greater rate than the 2.1 percent.

Commissioner Ivan Eberly objected, saying that it would be premature for the commission to make decisions based on the water concerns in mid-county as they are not fully known and the water board had taken no definite action.

In 1979, the Board of Supervisors set a 2.2 percent rate, allowing 940 units based on the proceeding year's population. In 1980, the board set a 2.4 rate, allowing 1,055 units.

A major problem has been the providing of low and moderate income housing, also a provision of the 1978-approved Measure J initiative which brought growth management to this county.

The failure to provide low and moderate cost housing will result in a carryover of up to 200 of those permits into 1981. They would be added to the 140 units that would be mandated if supervisors go for the 2.1 rate.

Also, the failure to get the low and

moderate permits issued resulted in 1979's population growth coming in at 1.8 percent, down from the allowed rate of 2.2 percent.

County planners used population figures issued by the Department of Finance which sets the 1980 population in this county at 178,300.

The U.S. Census report due out soon could change the total.

Growth management in the unincorporated area is based on a projected 1990 desired population of 218,500, of which the unincorporated area will hold 122,300 persons. The balance would reside in the county's four cities over which the county board has no jurisdiction.

In choosing the 2.1 percent, the commission continued a pace that will hold the growth rate to between 2.1 and 1.9 over the coming decade.

A low 1.5 rate would have allowed for accelerated growth in the coming nine years, and a 3.1 rate would have forced a reduction to 1.5 percent in the latter 1980s.

A staff report to the commission, it states, "Growth rates during the past three years have been between 1.8 and 2.7

percent and during the past 10 years growth rates have been generally declining from a high of 6.5 percent in 1972.

"The growth rates for the four cities for 1979-80 are as follows: Capitola, 5.4 percent; Santa Cruz, 1.5 percent; Scotts Valley, 4.6 percent, and Watsonville, 3.5 percent.

"The three smaller cities (Santa Cruz is the big one) have fairly high growth rates and their combined population is almost equal to Santa Cruz.

"It is projected that each of the jurisdictions will experience lower growth rates in 1980-81: Capitola, due to limited buildout potential; Santa Cruz, due to Measure O (city's growth management initiative); Scotts Valley, due to lack of adequate sewer and water capacity, and Watsonville, due to lack of adequate sewer transmission facilities.

"In summary, the three smaller cities are growing more rapidly than the unincorporated county while Santa Cruz is growing more slowly. According to the breakdown of permits at the 2.1 rate: 937 total, with 656 going to the urban areas and 281 to the rural areas.

Parts For Scotts Valley