

✓ New Life Center shelter director appeals condition in city permit

3-7-86

SANTA CRUZ — The director of the New Life Center shelter for the homeless on Fair Avenue is challenging recent Zoning Board approval for the 25-bed shelter.

New Life Center Director Steve Stiles filed an appeal to a Feb. 27 decision by board members approving a permit for the shelter.

The shelter had been operating without a permit, according to testimony given at a board hearing by Stiles and by Paul Brindel of Democratic Management Services, the coordinator of several publicly-funded shelters in the county.

In a letter of appeal filed Wednesday with the City Clerk, Stiles objects to a permit condition banning single males from staying at the shelter.

Bending to requests from residents in the neighborhood, board members had voted 3-1 to approve the permit, but restrict the shelter to women, children and families.

The center also runs a counseling, drug- and alcohol-treatment and Bible-study program at facilities located in a neighborhood zoned for single-family residences at 707 Fair Avenue.

Residents opposed to the permit turned out to register their objections at the board hearing.

City Manager Richard Wilson said he would ask the city attorney if it is

legal for the board to ban single men from using the shelter.

A Planning Department staff member said today Planning Director Peter Katzlberger has consulted the City Attorney about rewording the condition relating to single males. Katzlberger and the city attorney were unavailable for comment.

The appeal is tentatively set to be heard by the City Council April 8.

In his letter of appeal, Stiles says center officials want to specifically appeal the restriction on single males.

Stiles says the shelter "gives priority to women, children, families and single males, in that order.

"We do serve a smaller percentage of males, but a large percentage of those are in fact re-entered into our community, both in employment and housing."

Stiles claims the shelter has demonstrated it is a "re-entry" program and "not the type of shelter that exposes a neighborhood to an inappropriate danger of homeless males."

At the Zoning Board hearing residents said they were concerned about numbers of strange men wandering around their neighborhood. Since the shelter is closed during the day, residents said shelter guests had no place to go during daytime hours except to wander the

streets.

Center officials said rules require shelter guests to look for permanent housing and seek jobs during the day. Transportation is provided, if necessary. The guests must document their work and housing searches, according to the center officials.

Residents testified they had been told in conversations with Stiles that the center wants to expand the facility to house more than 25 homeless persons.

Stiles disputed the residents' testimony on this point and said the center has no definite plans for expansion or relocation.

Under questioning from boardmembers, Stiles testified the center would take in more than 25 persons in hardship situations, but see to it that the overflow guests left the following day.