

Shutinel 5/21/83

SC working on ordinance regulating activists on mall

SANTA CRUZ — City officials are struggling to come up with an ordinance to regulate propaganda stands on the mall without infringing on anyone's right of free speech.

The struggle continued Tuesday as the council considered a proposed ordinance that free speech activists say is too restrictive.

Countering that argument was City Parks Director Jim Lang, who said the ordinance would still allow as many as 500 stands and tables along the mall.

Presently there are only about four groups that use the mall to hand out their political and religious material.

Doug Rand of the Resource Center for Non-Violence said his group quit using the mall a year ago because of the hassles with city parks and the police over proper use.

As Lang explained, the ordinance requires stands and tables be six feet from shop fronts and four feet from

benches, Councilwoman Mardi Wormhoudt said she was worried there wouldn't be room left for many stands at all.

Councilman Joseph Ghio said it sounds as though the ordinance will put all stands right in the middle of the sidewalk.

Kayla Starr, a member of Vandenberg Action Coalition, said, "This is a good example of a law that's not worth having."

ACLU attorney Robert Taren said the council should either forget having a control ordinance or at least strike out the spacing provisions.

City attorney Rod Atchison warned the city had to be careful as any infringement of free speech would make the city vulnerable in court.

The council told Lang to draw up a map showing the number of stands and tables that will be allowed and to return in two weeks for a decision.