

Energy ordinances spark controversy

By Greg Garry
Sentinel Staff Writer

A wednesday morning meeting of the Santa Cruz County Energy Commission, held to consider recommending the approval of five new energy ordinances, evolved into a verbal tussle between commission members and area residents.

Raymond J. Garcia, of the Council of Improvement Associations of Aptos, reacted to the commission's recommendation for approval of an energy conservation ordinance which would cover existing residential developments, by saying that the ordinance will just result in more government.

Garcia said that climbing heating bills would supply the real incentive for homeowners to make their own improvements and added that the commission should recommend against the board of supervisors approving the ordinance at its Oct. 5 meeting.

An information sheet provided by the commission stated that the purpose and intent of the ordinance is to establish standards which promote the wise and efficient use of energy in existing residential structures by requiring installation of cost-effective weatherization techniques in connection with all title transfers of residential property.

This means that a residence would have to be brought up to certain energy efficient standards before it could be sold.

In response to Garcia's comments, Jesse Bregman, commission chairman, said the ordinance is not aimed at those who are conserving on their own, adding that it is the duty of someone to regulate energy conservation in the residential sector.

"We never knew you folks were doing this until we accidentally got a copy of this ordinance," said Garcia, who spiced his complaints with talk of Big Brother, communism and facism.

Another point of contention arose during the meeting over the wind energy conversion system ordinance, which the commission also recommended for approval.

The purpose of the ordinance is to promote the effective and efficient use of wind energy conversion systems, and to regulate the placement of wind energy conversion systems so that the public health and safety will not be jeopardized.

Two members of the commission disagreed over the ordinance. Don Bussey, Sr. cited an example of a wind machine he said is located on the way to Watsonville that works on two days a week. "Suppose a person considered everything and put up the thing and there is no wind?" said Bussey. "Then they didn't consider everything," commission member Teall Messer responded.

Don Harris, a local resident, pointed to what he considered another problem with wind energy machines. He said a friend of his had sent away to Chicago for a wind energy machine, and his use permit was denied because the machine was designed by out-of-state engineers.

Messer pointed out that engineers are required to have a license in each state. "What we are trying to do is to make it easier for someone to put it in," said Messer. He also said that the uniform building code, which is part of the ordinance, is designed to protect people from themselves.

In the information sheet detailing the parts of the wind energy ordinance, it is stated that where the structural components or installation vary from the standard design or specification, the proposed modifica-

tions shall be certified by a California registered professional engineer in compliance with the seismic structural design provisions of uniform building code.

Harris also said that a uniform building code will discourage innovation because it will favor the manufacturer. Following the discussion, the energy commission commended approval of the ordinance.

In other business, the commission recommended approval of the Energy Future Implementation Program. The program is drawn from a 12-page plan by Energy Future Santa Cruz, a local grass-roots organization.

In its plan, which was released in June, the organization details energy efficiency recommendations for residential, transportation, agriculture, business, government, and other areas of local energy use.

Doug McConnell, an area resident, said he objected to item 55 of the plan which suggests examining the potential for hydropower development in conjunction with flood control projects, and also objected to item 56 which encourages oceanic research related companies to locate models for wave power conversion coastal energy farming, or other ocean energy conversion methods along the coast of Santa Cruz County.

"With our five-foot tides here it's just not feasible," said McConnell. Bregman responded by saying that the commission was just recommending it and encouraging it.

"I don't have a crystal ball. I can't tell you what is going to happen in five years," said Bregman. McConnell continued his argument by saying, "To really implement these suggestions is a major change in the lives of the people of Santa Cruz County and a really question that."

Garcia then added, "This is what the community wants." In other business at the meeting, the commission also recommended approval of energy conservation for new residential development ordinance, which would lay down guidelines similar to the ordinance for existing structures.

The commission took no action on the final approval of the Cal SEAL requirement, which Energy Future's report describes as a State of California certification of quality for solar equipment and installations.

After the meeting, Mary Ann Johnson, county energy planner expressed her surprise at some of the objections, saying that the commission has had at least five other meetings concerning the retrofit ordinance and there was always public support.

"This is the first time that anyone has come in and spoken out against it," said Johnson.