

'Par course war' erupts again

By ADRIANA REYNERI
STAFF WRITER

Par courses make prickly neighbors, at least they do in La Selva Beach.

That's where residents are beginning their second year of feuding over a par course running between Asta and Arbolado drives.

As Ed Meagher, leading opponent in the par course war, put it: "It's hardball now."

Last week, the increasingly nasty fight took a new turn. That's when directors of the La Selva Beach Recreation District learned the district had installed much of the controversial course on rights-of-way to private roads. They already knew that the course signs had been installed without obtaining the necessary county permits and were in the process of redesigning the course, and relocating some of the signs, when the latest news came.

The discovery that part of the course was on private rather than district property gave Meagher the tool he needed to demand the district remove the unlawful signs, now.

The retired marketing executive, who lives at 22 Arbolado Drive, pressed county planning administrators to order the district to "take that junk out of there as soon as possible" — and he got results.

Chuck Schweikert, the lucky county planner handling the issue, said planning administrators decided yesterday to tell the district it must remove the signs and exercise stations that are in

the rights-of-way.

District directors are already in the process of seeking county approval for a revised par course plan — one that moves the offending signs from the rights-of-way onto the much smaller stretch of district property running between them, Linda Bourgaize, board chairwoman, said.

The county zoning administrator is likely to consider the new plan in late August or early September, Bourgaize said. The board had planned, in the meantime, to leave the signs where they are.

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Since Meagher is pressing the issue, Schweikert said, the county has asked the district to move them sooner, as opposed to a more convenient later.

Meagher's wife, Colleen, was understandably pleased with the decision, but she said, "I strongly recommend they put a time limit on it (the removal) because I think they're going to stall it."

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"The signs have been there for a year and the process is moving along," Bourgaize said. "I don't see any difference between today and last month."

Schweikert, who describes the par course issue as "one of those neighborhood kind of problems," explained why the county decided not to wait any longer in ordering the wayward signs and exercise stations removed.

Typically, he explained, the county allows an illegal project to stand while the builder applies for required permits. It would usually only order the project dismantled if it presented a danger or serious nuisance.

can't understand why the county has been so slow to act on such a clear-cut violation.

"That's hard to swallow," Mrs. Meagher said. "I don't know if there's someone down there who doesn't care or doesn't have courage."

The Meaghers will continue their fight to get rid of the par course altogether. Mr. Meagher said the district's new plan proposes placing the clutter of signs in an impossibly small area.

"If it weren't so damaging to the neighborhood, it would be ludicrous," he said.

He said the district, in pursuing its revised plan, is "throwing taxpayer money down a rathole in defense of something that was illegal to

begin with.

"They made a very dumb move and got called on it. They didn't like it. Now they're going to cram this down our throats any way they can."

The par course issue erupted in quiet, comfortable La Selva Beach last July, when the district installed the exercise course and its 20-plus interpretive signs.

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Homeowners along the course reacted to the signs as if they were ugly, unwelcome mushrooms that had sprouted overnight.

They called the course an "eyesore" and an "invitation to burglars," expressed outrage at not being consulted on the plan and objected to such a recreational use in a residential area. Ever since, the Meaghers, who said they represent a number of homeowners, have fought the par course.

Their efforts induced the district to seek a permit for the course, which it had unwittingly installed without the necessary permits from the county. While applying for the permit, the district eventually learned it had built most of the course on public right-of-way.

Bourgaize said the ongoing par course issue boils down to whether the will of a few residents should prevail against the wishes of what she perceives is the majority of the community.

"I'm not sure where you draw the line between neighborhood interests and community interests," Bourgaize said. "I'm not sure that anything short of asking their personal permission and doing what they said would make them happy."



These signs marking the La Selva par course will be coming down by order of the county.

Sam Vestal