

# City promises to forgive citations if campers leave

By David L. Beck  
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Santa Cruz officials have offered to tear up the tickets of any Camp Paradise residents who agree to leave the riverside tent city and not return. They have until the end of the month.

"I think it's a really good-faith and well-intentioned offer that reflects well on the city," said attorney Paul Sanford, who represents some of the campers. "There's no implicit threat behind it."

City Attorney John Barisone said the deal was simply this: "Anybody out of there by Aug. 31

gets his citation dismissed in the interests of justice. That's pretty much all there is to it."

The illegal campground along the San Lorenzo River sprang up in January when a band of homeless people began cleaning up the area and proclaimed the campground a drug- and alcohol-free zone.

Dan Alper, a friend of the campers who, like Sanford, was at a meeting Wednesday where the deal was disclosed, said it is essentially the offer the city made

See **CAMPERS**, Page 4B

4B



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Campers who have staked a claim at Camp Paradise, by the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz, won't be ticketed if they move out by the end of the month, city officials say.

## CAMPERS | Officials say city will forgive tickets

Continued from Page 1B

on Aug. 2, the day police began issuing tickets at the campsite. Camping in the city is illegal.

"We just said, 'If we vacate by a certain deadline, would you invalidate the tickets?' The mayor at that time said, 'Well, I'll have to think about it.' We were waiting to hear from the city." Officials called Wednesday, Alper said.

"Now the city has accepted that, and it's up to the individual campers," Alper said.

How will the city know whose tickets to tear up?

"They vote with their feet," Sanford said. "They just leave."

And when that happens, police Sgt. Rudy Escalante, who heads the Santa Cruz Police Department's neighborhood team, and Eric Seily, the department's homeless services liaison, will know. "Those two guys know everyone down there by name," Alper said. "It's a small town."

Escalante also took part in Wednesday's meeting, as did Police Chief Steve Belcher and City Manager Richard Wilson.

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