

Capitola Mobile Home Exclusive Plan In Effect

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After a year-long process, the Capitola City Council Thursday night put into effect its mobile home exclusive district, which makes it very difficult for mobile park owners to change land uses.

Eight of the city's nine parks were applied to the district.

The district was established recently by the council and Planning Commission, but no specific parks had been applied to it. The action was prompted last January after new owners of Tradewinds Mobile Home Park posted eviction notices on the 114 coaches and announced future plans to convert the Jade Street park into condominiums.

The MHE overlay district represents the culmination of action by the council. Earlier this year, it implemented a mobile home rent stabilization ordinance that ties rent increases to the cost of living index.

The council's unanimous action came before some 70 persons in the audience, most of them mobile home park residents. Only attorney James Kennedy, represent-

ing six of Capitola's mobile home park owners, and two park owners spoke in opposition.

Kennedy proposed the establishment of an amortization schedule similar to what is used in the city's sign ordinance. What it would do, he explained, is set up a schedule of depreciation for both the park itself and the individual mobile homes. The park owner and residents would enter a binding agreement that establishes a fair selling price of the mobile home, if and when the park owner desires to change uses.

Kennedy told councilmembers his alternative represented "a more reasonable solution than what you have before you."

He added that his alternative looked into both the residents and park owners' investment. It also required the park owner to pay the "fair market value" for the mobile homes.

Councilman Michael Routh, explaining that the basis for the MHE district was to preserve the city's mobile home parks, asked Kennedy what would prevent park owners from buying out the residents at the beginning of a 25-year amortization schedule.

Kennedy admitted that part of his proposal hadn't yet been worked out. It is conceivable, though, to work out a relocation plan or credit toward a condominium if a park is converted, he added.

Pacific Cove Mobile Home Park resident Joe McCarthy made it clear that residents were in favor of the MHE district. He pointed out the parks as "low-cost housing" and urged the council "not to let smart lawyers talk you out of it."

The residents gave no sympathy to Priscilla Timmons, co-owner of Wharf Road Manor. They scoffed at her testimony when she maintained the council "was making us subsidize these people (residents)."

She added, "You will not allow us to make a living. You're forgetting some of us have mobile home parks to live. This is my livelihood, not just an investment. You need to think about it both ways."

Haro Wenzell, owner of Loma Vista Mobile Estates, agreed. He explained he had no intentions of changing the land use "as long as we're not squeezed out of the market."

Senior Citizens Legal Services attorney Robert Taren disagreed in telling coun-

cilmembers the MHE district was a good plan and needed no changes. In testimony that was later repeated by councilmembers, Taren said the district does not "lock" park owners into never changing land uses.

Councilman Bob Garcia noted that park owners could always come before the council to request a general plan change, as well as ordinance change. Routh added that the way things were before, land uses could possibly have been changed without ever coming before the council.

Mayor Jerry Clarke reflected the court-like setting when he recessed for a break after the decision was made. He mistakenly called the council chambers a "courtroom."

Parks included within the MHE district, with the number of coaches in parenthesis, are Tradewinds (114), Brookvale Terrace (111), Castle Mobile Estates (108), Loma Vista (90), Pacific Cove (82), Turner Lane (76), Cabrillo Mobile Home Estates (68) and Wharf Road Manor (34).

The only Capitola park not included is tiny Gemini Trailer Court, which has only six coaches located in the Depot Hill neighborhood.