

# Marmo's, Golden Torch trailer parks purchased

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WATSONVILLE — A old-time Pajaro Valley trailer park, plagued with everything from crime to sewage problems, is being purchased by a non-profit housing agency.

Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition based in Redwood City has secured the contracts needed to buy Marmo's Pinto Lake Park in Watsonville and the Golden Torch Trailer Park in Aptos.

The newly renovated trailer parks will offer rentals to families in need of affordable housing.

Jane Barr with Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition said although she couldn't disclose the purchasing price, it is based on the value of the land. Barr said that the sale

will be final May 12 for Marmo's and May 8 for Golden Torch.

Presently, both parks feature affordable housing for low income families but have seen many problems over the years. "Marmo's is in receivership because of septic problems and poor management," Barr said.

Electrical problems and overcrowding have also been common. Barr said that some of the current trailers used at the two parks are the type used that hook on the end of a truck and are not adequate for families.

"Some don't even meet state regulations and are technically not supposed to be used for housing."

Last month, a man was murdered in the restroom facilities at

Marmo's. The case remains unsolved.

Barr said that Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition will make many improvements to the two trailer parks. She said that they are planning to redo the roads and upgrade the utilities. Barr also said that they are considering building an on-site community center that will offer a computer lab for children. English as a second language classes may also be held. She said that a manager will remain on-site to assist tenants.

"We do try to help people improve, and to get them as far away from the homeless situation as possible," Barr said.

Barr cites the success they have had with the purchase of San Andreas Farm Labor Camp. She said they have received positive response from the tenants there. "People are really excited about it."

At Marmo's, the plan is to build homes on solid foundations. This means that the current tenants will not be allowed to use their existing homes if they want to remain residents of the park. Barr said they will be working closely with the tenants to provide an easy transition. "We will have meetings with the tenants following purchase of the property," Barr said.

If the current tenants do not wish to remain at the parks, Barr said, "We will be offering money for people to leave voluntarily."

There are currently 20 units at Marmo's but Barr said they will increase that number to about 50. The Golden Torch will have about 85 units built.

"People really appreciate safe and affordable housing and are willing to abide by the rules," Barr said.