

Cigarette machine

✓ SC Council moves to ban cigarette vending machines

By KAREN CLARK

Sentinel staff writer

72491
SANTA CRUZ — Despite objections from bar owners, the City Council set into motion Tuesday an ordinance that would banish cigarette vending machines from the city limits.

A public hearing on the ordinance will be conducted in September during the second reading of the proposal.

The ordinance, brought to the council by member Don Lane, is an attempt to make it more difficult for people under 18 to buy cigarettes.

A representative of local tavern owners asked that bars be exempted from the ordinance because no one under 21 is allowed inside.

"Since a bar operating under a Type 48 license prohibits anyone

under 21 from even being on the premises, it is impossible for anyone under that age to be using a cigarette vending machine," said spokeswoman Beverly Swanson.

But LeAnne Ravinale, a member of the Tobacco Education Coalition of Santa Cruz County, told council members that a study done in Watsonville in December showed that a group of teens, ages 14 to 16, were successful 100 percent of the time in buying from vending machines.

That included, she said, one vending machine in a bar and one in a bar/restaurant.

Councilman Neal Coonerty, who said he used to be part owner in a business with a liquor license, said he was convinced a minor could use the cigarette vending machine without being caught.

"The last thing the bartender is worried about is if people are pumping quarters into the machine," he said.

Councilman Louis Rittenhouse cast the lone dissenting vote, saying he believed a bar where no one under 21 is allowed should not be prohibited from having a cigarette vending machine.

Councilman Scott Kennedy pointed to statistics provided by the county's Public Health Commission in explaining why he supported keeping the ordinance all-encompassing.

"The tobacco industry must recruit 5,000 new smokers each day in order to replace smokers who have quit or died," he said.

That is enough of a reason, said Kennedy, to "weigh in on the side of protecting minors."