



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Concerned residents pack Tuesday's Santa Cruz City Council meeting, where city leaders said they will use the courts to try to halt the state's spraying plans.

Council votes to fight moth spraying

Light Brown Apple Moth

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SANTA CRUZ — The Santa Cruz City Council will try to stop the state's aerial spraying of the light brown apple moth next month by taking the case to court.

In a 4-3 decision, in which Mayor Emily Reilly served as the tie-breaker, the council decided to either file an injunction in Santa Cruz County Superior Court or join a similar lawsuit pending in Monterey County.

The vote came after the council heard nearly an hour of emotional testimony by roughly two dozen residents. Some equated the state's eradication tactics to "state-organized terrorism" and "dropping poison on the people" while others, with children in tow, simply begged the council to consider one constant throughout the controversy: Nobody, not even scientists, can definitively say what kind of long-term effects the pesticide, known as CheckMate LBAM-F, will have on humans.

Complicating matters is that the manufacturer, the Bend, Ore.-based Suterra Inc., won't disclose the ingredients of the synthetic pheromone on the basis that it's a trade secret, a fact that has upped the intensity among opponents.

Councilman Ed Porter made the motion to take the issue to court. He said he thought the state's presentation at the start of the meeting, by state officials including Agriculture Secretary A.G. Kawamura, was "scattered, fragmentary." Porter said he is considering leaving town if the aerial spraying occurs in early November.