

Outhouses In Rural Areas In Comeback?

By PAUL BEATTY
Sentinel Staff Writer

It may come to be known as "the fly-free old-fashioned outhouse building code."

Officially, it is the Class K Housing Code and supervisors Tuesday set April 26 at 3 p.m. in board chambers of the county center for a full public hearing on whether this county should adopt it.

The Class K code could allow use of old-fashioned privies in rural homes that are built by owners or their agents on parcels of 20 acres or more in rural areas of the county.

It also would allow a broad expression of building preferences as long as county planners, environmental health and other inspectors found the dwellings to be structurally safe and not a threat to the health and safety of the community.

About 50 members of the public sat through the long af-

ternoon agenda to have their say on the issue.

At 6:30 p.m., the board cut off discussion after hearing from a number of persons, including an attorney representing "20 families from the Last Chance Road area."

That remote area in Swanton has attracted numerous home, known to have been built without permit and the benefit of the Uniform Building Code (UBC).

Attorney Barry Vogel told the board that his clients want to conform to Class K regulations but that the UBC would have prevented them from building the homes they desired.

Concerning the legalization of outhouses, Vogel said they could be made to be "completely safe and hygienic," an opinion agreed upon by Environmental Health Officer Ray Talley and physician Jim Dodd.

Dodd testified that we now live in a culture that can no

longer afford "either the automobile or the flush toilet."

Supervisor Gary Patton agreed, "I am not at all enamored of that device," stating that it was wasteful, forced government to assume the responsibility of disposing of the waste and that the modern flush toilet "is so complex that even plumbers can't fix it."

However, Hilda Lans, a member of the public, didn't see things that way, saying the Class K code would "make America filthy" and called those advocating the change "representatives of outhouses."

She drew wild applause, though, as she told the board, "Before you approve this business, go experience it."

Staff members told the board that two counties have adopted the permissive code, Mendocino and Humboldt, but that only two permits in each county have been taken out in the year they have had the Class K code.

Vogel, stating he helped write the Mendocino code, refuted that statement saying that "31 permits for compost privies" had been taken out and that Mendocino had a program to "regularly monitor them."

Talley argued that this county did not have the manpower to monitor outhouses and compost privies, causing a young woman in the audience to ask the board how it could find the manpower to vigorously enforce the building code if it didn't have enough inspectors to monitor regulated privies.

Her remark referred to Planning Director Kay Bowden's recommendation to the board to either allow Class K standards, or direct county personnel to vigorously enforce the UBC and health and safety regulations, which would mean an enforcement program against such dwellings as are in the Last Chance Road area.

Barry said he was convinced that owner-builders in this county would cooperate with a Class K code, and predicted that without it, people will continue to build their own style homes in the woods.

"Conform the laws to reality," Vogel said, "and folks here will cooperate."

Talley said that whereas he would approve the "old fashioned privy," he was not ready to approve humus toilets or compost privies.

Promotion Commission

The County Promotional Commission will meet Thursday at 1:30 p.m. in room 410, county center.

He said that in certain tests, it had been found there were hookworm eggs and evidence of protozoan cysts.

The environmental health officer said he also worried about the change of ownerships.

Bowden said that any approved changes to allow Class K should include the regulation that owner-built homes have to be lived in by the owner and that any change in ownership the first year of occupancy would mean the home would

then have to be brought up to regular standard.

Patton asked how the county could justify allowing relaxed standards in the rural areas and not in urban areas. He and Bowden also expressed concern that relaxed standards would increase the density of rural areas.

Supervisor Marilyn Liddicoat commented that if relaxed codes were found to be realistic for rural areas, the board could then relax urban standards.

Council Okays Longer Hours At Main Library

Longer Sunday hours for the Santa Cruz main library were approved by the Santa Cruz City Council Tuesday.

But while the council okayed stretching the library hours to 9 p.m., it also told the Library Board that it is a city body, not a city-county independent board. And as a city body, it had better bring its by-laws and practices in line with city attorney opinions.

Just who has control of the Library Board has been a simmering issue for some time between the city, county, and the board itself.

The money to enlarge the Sunday library hours came from some savings in the use of federal anti-recession funds granted last year. Nearly \$12,000 was saved on fire inspection, "handsweeping" projects through public works, and the Sunday library service.

The funds were to be shifted to use in water conservation, a street-sweeping program, and a fire dispatch monitor. But the council added in the longer Sunday hours, so the library won't be closing at 5 p.m.

Librarian Charles Atkins said he is not sure how many people will use the library Sun-

day evening, but the council by a 5-1 vote with Joe Ghio dissenting said they want the new hours in effect "immediately."

The council and the board also was presented with a long analysis of the legal status of the Library Board by City Attorney Rod Atchison. Atchison said that many parts of the board's by-laws conflict with the city charter which sets up and controls the board, and they also conflict with the state Brown Act requiring open and public meetings.

Atchison and the board are to get together to go over the legal status.

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