

Mobile homes exempted from rent law

BY GUY LASNIER

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors approved an ordinance that would ban discrimination against families with children or on the basis of age in rental housing.

The supervisors deleted, at the request of the county mobile home commission, any mention of mobile home parks. Many seniors had expressed concern to the commission that an ordinance might outlaw senior-only parks.

Dwight Herr, the chief deputy county counsel, told the board that state law is "somewhat unsettled" as it pertains to mobile home parks and age limits. Several parks in Santa

Cruz county limit residents to over 18, over 35 and over 55 years old respectively.

Herr said a footnote in a state Supreme Court decision banning discrimination against children in rental housing left room for exempting senior citizens complexes.

Many seniors attended the board meeting to ask that mobile home parks, particularly ones with age 55 restrictions be left out of the ordinance. They were pleased by the board's actions.

Other persons including some seniors told the board it was allowing discrimination against younger people who may not be able to

afford anything other than a mobile home.

Zona Hargis, who owns a mobile home sales business, asked the board to give some consideration to families with children. Only 285 spaces exist in county mobile home parks that allow children, she said.

Speaking for persons who fall between the 55 age limit and an 18-year-old cutoff, Hazel Hoffman, a 42-year-old woman whose children have left home, said a mobile home is the

"only way I can survive in this area."

Thirty-five-year-old Kip Thornton told the supervisors he just bought a mobile home in a park that allowed no one younger than 35 to live there. "I couldn't believe that if I were 34½, I couldn't live there," he said. Thornton added that two months after he moved

in, the age limit was raised to 55. He could stay, he was told, but if he married, his wife would have to be 55 or older.

Supervisor Dan Forbus said the issue tended to pit the old against the young which he called a tragedy. He also called the state's law "very unclear."