

Decision delayed on mobile home rent increase

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The county's Mobile Home Advisory Commission Monday postponed a decision on whether residents of a Live Oak mobile home park are entitled to rent control.

Pine Knoll Mobile Manor residents are protesting a rent increase scheduled to take effect Feb. 1 which, coupled with a recent \$25 parking fee for two-car families, represents nearly a 50 percent increase, park resident spokeswoman Barri Durning told the commission.

"This increase is 10 times the allowable rent increase (under the rent-control ordinance)," she said.

However, park manager Greg Evans has said that residents receiving the increase are not governed by rent control because their homes are in the recreational vehicle section of the park. Of 75 spaces in the park, 28 are mobile home spaces and the rest are recreational vehicle spaces, he said.

Durning said that residents protesting the rent increase do not live in the section of the park that has been designated as only for recreational vehicle use in the past. That section contains 10 spaces, she said.

Those protesting are located in a third section of the park, she said, and have had their rents adjusted according to the rent-control ordinance since 1982.

"The rent increase we are usually given is a 3 percent increase," Durning said.

The new increase would raise their rent to \$200 a month, she said. Park residents, though,

are not protesting the monetary amount so much as the precedent that might be set.

Resident Wally Cranor read a letter to the commission, signed by 14 residents, which stated their concerns. "We believe this to be an Evans 'test' of the strength of rent control," Cranor read, "and, if they succeed in this attempt to overturn it, numerous other Evans-managed parks will soon follow suit."

Evans asked for a continuance of the hearing because he said he had not had time to prepare his presentation. He manages 17 other mobile home parks, he said, and has been involved in "a tangle of red tape" trying to solve problems in some of those.

He had also been under the impression for a time that the hearing had been postponed. Evans told the commission. Therefore, his attorney was unable to be present.

Durning protested a continuance and asked that the commission decide the matter now. Evans has been kept informed of what residents were doing, she said, and had ample time to prepare for the hearing.

"It's not our fault that there are so many complaints against Greg Evans that he cannot handle what is here today," she said.

Despite Durning's protest, commission members voted for the continuance, with the stipulation that Evans not adjust their rents until the matter is settled.

The commission's next meeting is scheduled for Feb. 10. After it makes its decision, that decision may be appealed to the Board of Supervisors.