

Planners temper enthusiasm for car dealerships

By BOB SMITH

The first hurdle was cleared Thursday night for four Santa Cruz auto dealers to move to Capitola.

But a determined mobile home park resident succeeded in erecting several more hurdles that the dealerships will have to leap before finally getting a green light to move into new quarters along the freeway between 41st Avenue and Wharf Road.

The planning commissioners made it clear Thursday night that the dealers will have to meet some very tough environmental concerns before getting commission approval.

"The days of the old-fashioned car dealership are gone — they are offensive and they are obsolete," Planning Com-

Resident of nearby mobile home park voices environmental concerns

missioner Marilyn Crenshaw said at one point during the lengthy public hearing.

The City Council, sitting as the city Redevelopment Agency board of directors, has already approved the idea of the four auto dealers — Marina Pontiac-Cadillac, Roy Baldwin Motors Buick-AMC, Santa Cruz British Motors-Subaru, and Santa Cruz Porsche-Audi-Isuzu — building new facilities in Capitola.

And the city is acting as the dealers' representative in asking for the general plan and redevelopment plan maps to be changed.

But the Planning Commission and, ultimately, the City Council still had to approve changes

in the city's general plan and redevelopment plan map, an environmental impact report on the development and, ultimately, the actual plans for the four separate agency complexes.

The Planning Commission Thursday night approved two resolutions that changed the general plan and redevelopment plan designation on the land from a mixture of multiple family residential and commercial zoning to all commercial.

But they included in the resolutions stipulations that anyone building on the property will have to solve some major environmental issues raised by Jack Waits, a resident of the

Loma Vista Mobile Home Park which backs up to the proposed auto dealership area.

Those conditions, commissioners suggested during the meeting could result in soundproofed repair shops, with air being scrubbed of exhaust fumes before being released from the buildings, radio paging systems instead of the common public address systems and restrictions on operating hours.

One commissioner even suggested the elimination of all repair and vehicle servicing on the site.

Waits said construction of the auto agencies there would create intolerable conditions for the mobile home park resi-

dents and those living in the homes off Derby and 42nd avenues.

The attack took the dealers by surprise. There was no one from the dealers or Dapont Construction Co. — the project builders — in the audience Thursday night.

The residents, Waits said, will be subjected to noise, lights, air pollution, vandalism and radio frequency interference.

Waits argued that residents had moved into the adjacent residential areas believing that at least part of the vacant 10 acre site along the freeway would be developed as residential property. "If you put an auto agency in there, you will

be doing a disservice to the people nearby and to Capitola itself," Waits said.

The biggest problem for the community will be the added traffic on 41st Avenue.

Waits told the commission, "41st Avenue can't handle the traffic now. It will be adding a tremendous amount of traffic," he said. "At least 100 people will be working there. There will be traffic from the customers, cars being roadtested, and demonstrated."

The auto repair shops that will be built as part of the auto agencies will generate additional noise and air pollution, Waits said. The noise from the paging systems commonly used

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at auto dealerships and the parking lot lights will also disrupt the nearby homes. Arc welders will generate massive amounts of radio frequency "noise", he added, that could disrupt radio and television reception in the nearby homes.

"We hope that our neighborhoods will not be ruined by the unsightliness of a manufacturing facility — and that is what a garage is," Waits concluded.

Waits and Lorna Vista park owner Harro Wenzel argued that the area should be zoned residential.

Waits lost that point. Commissioners made it clear that they agreed with Commissioner Marilyn Crenshaw that the site was a lousy one for any type of homes.

Commissioner Bill Fisher said he didn't think it was "safe" to put housing on the property, because of the noise and atmospheric pollution from the freeway. But Waits definitely scored points with the commission on the other issues.

"The whole thing seemed great," commissioner Jack Goold said, "but this presentation has caused me to rethink the thing."

"There are some very valid points," Crenshaw agreed. "What about air quality and noise pollution. We should protect people from air and noise pollution. It might be possible to set up a buffer zone (between the agencies and the homes.

"I agree," Fisher said, "that auto uses, if they have any impact on the residential areas, are not appropriate for the area."

But commissisoner Norma Kriege seemed to take a more neutral stance. Telling Waits that she agreed with his concerns, she then said she couldn't approve homes on the property and added: "I don't think that the land can be developed with any viable economic use that won't impact your mobile home park."

The City Council will hold a public hearing on the project Jan. 24.