

Council approves stiffer rules for skateboarders

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Capitola is getting tough on skateboarders.

The Capitola City Council approved a set of "rules of the road" for skateboarders last night similar to those governing bicyclists.

The proposal by Police Chief Don Branton received vigorous support from Councilman Ron Graves, who said a serious accident this week emphasized the need for safety measures.

He was referring to an accident in which a skateboarder crashed into a car on River-view Avenue, Graves said. Skidmarks showed the driver tried to avoid the collision, but the skater ended up going through the windshield nevertheless.

"I think we've got to get tough," Graves said.

That accident, Branton said, had as much potential for being fatal as any the city has had recently involving a skate-

boarder. The skater came from private property into the street in front of the car.

Branton said a more common problem is caused by skaters racing around the palm tree on The Esplanade.

"And we keep repaving all our streets," Mayor Bob Bucher said. "We've got the best skateboarding in the county."

While Branton's rules won't ban skateboarders from Capitola streets, they will require more caution, because there will be citations and confiscation of boards for violations.

Skaters will be prohibited from interfering with the flow of vehicular traffic, and must "exercise due and proper care when skating in the presence of pedestrians."

Skaters will also be required to obey common vehicular rules, such as stopping at stop signs, yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks, and yielding at yield signs.

Additional areas will also be off-limits to skateboards. A prohibition now exists on Capitola Village sidewalks and in the Esplanade Park.

Under the new rules, skateboards will be banned from Jade Street Park, excluding the parking lot. They will also be banned from the city's tennis courts and the new Pacific Cove parking lot.

The council directed City Attorney Richard Manning to prepare an ordinance incorporating the rules discussed during last night's meeting.

Warnings issued to skateboarders will be entered into the Police Department's computers, Branton said. First-time offenders will receive letters of warning, but a second offense will result in skateboard impoundment.

Expected to go into effect sometime this summer, the ordinance will be followed by a school skateboard-safety program in the fall.