

Capitola begins purchase of mobile home park

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CAPITOLA — The City Council here formally began the process Thursday night to purchase Pacific Cove Mobile Home Park, with intentions of converting a portion of it to a parking lot to help alleviate the long-standing parking crunch downtown.

In other business, councilmen decided to follow the city of San Jose's lead in challenging a state mandate which requires cities to pass ordinances allowing the construction of so-called "granny" units within established residential neighborhoods.

The formal process toward the future purchase of the 83-space mobile home park involved the unanimous approval by councilmen on a \$5,000 option to purchase. The park reportedly is for sale for \$1.6 million.

The option to purchase will hold the park for the city for three months, while the city undergoes engineering and feasibility studies to decide whether their plan is possible.

City Manager Steve Burrell estimated it will take eight to 10 weeks before the studies are completed.

Besides the option to purchase, councilmen approved a suggested timeline of March 22 as the date Burrell will report back. The council also passed a state relocation guideline so that a relocation plan can be developed for park residents should it become necessary.

As proposed, park residents would be guaranteed lifetime tenancy. However, a controversial part of the plan requires the elimination of 20 to 25 percent of the coaches in order to consolidate them into the lower portion of the park.

The park, located within walking distance of Capitola Village, is divided into two terraces. The upper terrace nearest Monterey Avenue would be used for the 300- to 350-car parking lot. The lower terrace would remain a mobile home park.

It is believed to be the first time a city

has proposed going into the mobile home park business.

The engineering studies will include a number of items, according to Burrell. These range from determining the specific number of parking spaces and the costs associated with moving any of the coaches.

Also to be investigated will be the proposed funding. Primary funding currently is seen from the installation of so-called "parking banks" downtown. These computerized banks would be centralized in specific areas and handle an entire block rather than having meters with poles the entire block.

The city hopes to utilize its recently-formed Parking Authority to borrow the down payment for the purchase of the park. The revenue from the parking banks would be the biggest source of funds to pay back the money.

Other funding mechanisms to be studied include a business license override fee on village merchants and an assessment on property in the area. The city's parking in-lieu fund, as well as a portion of traffic fines and rental money from the mobile home park residents, are other possibilities.

The possible future battle the city may have with the state over a "granny" ordinance goes back to state legislation passed last year on a bill authored by Sen. Henry Mello, D-Watsonville.

The city of San Jose recently decided not to adopt an ordinance allowing such second units to be built — flying directly in the face of the state mandate. Capitola councilmen decided if a big city like San Jose doesn't have follow suit, they don't either.

Councilmen voted 4-1 in directing staff to investigate San Jose and other cities that might have decided not to adopt an ordinance. Only Councilman Dennis Beltram voted against.

Beltram favored adoption of an or-

dinance to allow second units to be built. The units have been dubbed "granny" units since they are most often used by seniors, who prefer the safety of living near relatives.

Beltram said an ordinance would help alleviate the continued housing shortage in the city. Other councilmen, however, feared established neighborhoods may be downgraded by the influx of such units.

They also pointed to the small-sized lots in the city. Most would not allow a second unit anyway.

The proposed ordinance from the Planning Commission set numerous limits on any second units. They would only be allowed on lots of 5,100 square feet or more, units must be between 300 and 600 square feet and cannot be for sale.

"I don't think we should be pushed around by the state," said Councilman Michael Routh. "We don't have to be intimidated."

He said findings could be made that show such second units to be detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare of residents.