

No vote on logging ordinance

By JOHN BESSA

Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — A public hearing Tuesday brought comment but no solution to the dilemma of small timber harvests.

In an emotion-filled, three-hour public hearing, the county Board of Supervisors voted to continue until next week the discussion of a proposal to restrict most kinds of unregulated tree cutting.

An ordinance the board enacted in October will expire April 15. That moratorium halted small timber harvests, after an explosion in logging that was blamed on the high value of lumber.

"I wouldn't want to put it off so long ... that we wouldn't have the opportunity to protect the resource," Supervisor Gary Patton said.

The state Department of Forestry allows owners of fewer than three acres to harvest timber without the extensive review given to larger harvests.

Although nearly everyone at the meeting condemned clear-cutting trees, the details of an ordinance designed to keep that from happening is being pulled in two directions by people on both sides of timber cutting.

"None of us want clear-cutting, but they can't say 'no cutting,'" said Tim Chambers, a Ben Lomond resident.

"I feel that people have the

wrong idea about people who work in the woods. I don't want to see all the trees gone for my grandchildren either," he said.

The proposed ordinance would require harvesters to file a notice for county planners to review.

The proposal would require a permit for a minor timber harvest if planners thought the harvest might hurt the environment.

Planning staff members predicted the permit fee for cutting trees would be less than \$100. The procedure would take 10 days at most, they told the board Tuesday.

The proposal includes exemptions.

Trees within 30 feet of a home, where a proposed home would be built, orchard species or five trees could be removed without a permit.

Jim Thomas said that just maintaining his Ben Lomond land would be burdensome under the proposed ordinance.

Three or four trees die a year on the land, he told the board.

Some at the hearing said the Planning Department should not control whether they can cut trees on their land. Others were concerned about a provision in the ordinance stating that a permit "may" be denied if the property violates any section of the county code.

"Well, if they don't like your attitude, it will be (denied)," Chambers said.

Several people welcomed the proposed ordinance and the deforestation they said it could prevent.

Celia Scott said that when people settled the United States, there was unbroken forest from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River and from Alaska to Southern California.

"Five percent of the ancient forest is left," she said.

Some said they supported a moratorium, and that the county should wait until state forestry officials create rules to govern the smaller harvests they normally exempt.

Also under attack was an exemption allowing forested land to be converted to another use.

The Planning Department should scrutinize conversions and clear-cuts, not smaller harvests, said Mike Jani of Big Creek.

Jani warned supervisors that by passing the ordinance, the county would be taking responsibility for most of the trees in the county.

"I don't know that you want to do that," he said.

Supervisors directed their staff to prepare an ordinance that would extend the moratorium for up to a year, in case the permanent ordinance was not ready, to ensure harvesting would not resume.

Rules, regulations 'cut to my heart'

By KATHY KREIGER

Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — A man from a veteran San Lorenzo Valley tree-cutting family broke down and cried Tuesday at a discussion of proposed new local logging rules.

"It cuts to my heart," Howard Liebenberg told county supervisors, and then his voice broke.

Government rules, regulations, licenses and such have proliferated beyond reason, Liebenberg said, and there's no telling where they'll lead in the future.

"I used to tell people, 'Come on down and get a sewer repair permit, it's free,'" he said earlier in his comments. "Sewer permits are \$288 today."

"Where does it stop?" Liebenberg said. "... All I want to do is live in the mountains and be left alone. There's no let-up and that's why I'm here. ... I feel like a sheep in a field among wolves. It's tearing me up. I'm really upset. I can't sleep at night."

Then Liebenberg sat down and buried his face in his hands, continuing to sob.

The proposed regulations don't come from nowhere, said Live Oak Supervisor Jan Beautz, but are the result of "tons of phone calls" from upset neighbors.

"It's unfair to think these are things dreamed up here on the fifth floor," Beautz said.