

# City Admits Vote Against EOC Survey

By Wallace Wood  
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An attempt to avoid public embarrassment to county Economic Opportunity Commission officials and other persons connected with the EOC's current housing survey actually led city councilmen to embarrass themselves a bit yesterday.

City officials — including many city councilmen — admitted just a little sheepishly they voted against any city sponsorship of the housing survey at a secret "personnel" session two weeks ago.

Once the fact was out, however, few showed much reluctance in saying they have little faith in the EOC's survey and want no part of it. At least three councilmen have directed their wives and families not to answer EOC questionnaires.

EOC area service center director Chuck Keaty, who is co-ordinating the survey, said he didn't think the council's attitude "is any worse than some people's who just pay lip service to us."

"Some of the questions are almost personal," Councilman Ernest Wicklund, Sr., declared. "They hire some of the least qualified people (for interviewers) and we have no control over them. We didn't want them snooping any more than they had to." Wicklund said his family has refused to answer questions.

Mayor Sam Leask had only a guarded "no comment" on the decision at the closed session, but said strongly he believes the survey's statistics may not be fair, and that he "doesn't expect them to be valid." The mayor also said he has ordered no answers given to interviewers at his house. Vice-mayor Raymond Goodrich made a similar statement about questionnaires.

The city was asked to join the survey, along with the county Health department, some time ago. Originally, the plan was to have the EOC's 12 interviewers trained by the city's building department to spot obvious housing code violations.

This would have been helpful to the city, since Santa Cruz must update its old "workable program" from the Redevelopment for federal agencies. A workable program is a collection of data on the community's plans for self-improvement. Cataloguing substandard housing is one step in updating.

Thumbs quickly went down on this city training idea when it came up at the closed session. Some councilmen said they didn't "want any part" of an EOC-run project, since the city would have little or no control over interviewers. Others, such as Wicklund, pointed out the interviewers would not save the city any money in the long run. "We have to do a more exhaustive survey, using building inspectors who know what they're doing," Wicklund said yesterday.

City Planning Director Neal Walton confirmed this viewpoint. He said the council's action was only against training EOC workers and direct city involvement, and that he and the building inspectors were allowed to suggest questions which interviewers might ask. "These questions will help us know where to look" for substandard housing, he declared.

Walton added that "one of the things which is going to have to be done is a systematic housing code enforcement program. And they couldn't do that for us."

Keaty backed Walton's statement, in turn. He said the results of the survey will be turned over to the city and to the county health department, which also suggested questions for the survey, "if they want it."

Councilman Eugene Fleming, who said he wasn't at the closed session, nevertheless threw in that "I wouldn't

want anything like this done which wasn't under close supervision by the city."

Councilmen Norman Walters and Richard Werner could not be reached for comment.

On the question of why the matter was discussed at a closed meeting and not announced in advance, Wicklund said it

was to "avoid embarrassing some people with good intentions, but bad ideas." He said "the public could have gotten some very wrong ideas about this if we had hashed it out in the open."

Other councilmen, who asked their comments be "off the record" supported this viewpoint.

They indicated a public discussion would have led to needless ill-will all around.

Mrs. Lorette Wood, who is the council's representative on the EOC, said she does not know who brought the matter up, but that "the city has decided not to take part, so there was really no action."