

Exercise course uproar continues in La Selva Beach

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LA SELVA BEACH — The lines are drawn — and the gap is larger than ever — in the on-going controversy over an illegally installed exercise course.

The La Selva Beach Recreation District Board Tuesday night decided to pursue the acquisition of the necessary county permits in order to make the course legal. Their decision came despite strong protests from a dozen residents along Arbolado and Asta drives who look out at the 20-stop, 20-sign exercise circuit.

The course was installed by the Recreation Board, which didn't know county permits were necessary. It sits in a narrow, tree-shaded residential strip between the two dirt residential roads.

While residents who live near the course want it torn down, the Recreation Board refused.

"We put it in and we have to proceed with the proper permits," said Board Chairwoman Linda Bourgaize afterward. "We're sorry we didn't know we needed the permits in the first place, but we do feel we put it in for the right reasons."

Bourgaize added that any modifications to the course now would be unwise, particularly when the county permit process may involve ordering specific changes.

And, opposition is gearing for a fight at the county level. They still hope to get the county to order the course removed. Talk has included the possibility of a future lawsuit.

In fact, one resident has already taken on the task himself. Upon returning home from a weekend trip, the man found he couldn't get his trailer back into his driveway due to one of the exercise stations. So, he took his chainsaw to the posts and cut it down. He got his trailer into his driveway.

At the Recreation Board meeting, resident spokesman Ed Meagher maintained the issue is more than just the exercise course. "The issue is basically the property rights of owners in issues involving land use change," he said.

"If we were just fighting exercise courses, then we're coming down on the wrong side of motherhood and apple pie — in this Jane Fonda, Yuppie era of

exercise," added Meagher.

Asta Drive resident June Sanders conceded the board "has a tiger by the tail." She maintained, "They're not going to back down and we aren't going to back down."

Bourgaize was quick to point out, however, that the Recreation Board has received a petition from other residents of La Selva Beach favoring the course. She would not say how many signatures have been obtained.

"We have had other people say they really like it," she said. "We can't tear it down. We'll pursue our commitment."

Meagher responded by adding they have a petition "with more than 100 signatures." He said opposition has come from further than just the two-block area around the course.

That petition objects to the course, maintaining "it changes the whole appearance of what was once a locally residential neighborhood to an unsightly clutter of ugly apparatus and commercial road signs."

Fellow director Pete Stanger added that La Selva Beach taxpayers have been maintaining the wooded strip for 26 years. "Only a small number of people who live right next to the woods were deriving the benefit," he said. "This was a way of hopefully opening the area to other recreational purposes for more people."

According to Bourgaize, the board presently is in the midst of laying the groundwork to apply for the permits, which include environmental and erosion-control review, as well as the need for a coastal and commercial development permit. Detailed maps designating where trees and roads are must accompany the application.

Formal application for permits is still three to four weeks away, said Bourgaize. The extra costs, estimated at \$2,000, will also put a dent in the board's budget.

Bourgaize said they had hoped to use most of the \$33,000 annual budget to remodel the clubhouse kitchen.

The board obtained the \$9,200 course with the help of a 50-percent grant from Wells Fargo Bank and \$3,000 from La Selva Beach volunteer firemen.