

Council OKs tough rules on mobile-home-park use

With virtually no discussion, the Watsonville City Council last night unanimously passed an ordinance that places a series of tough regulations on conversions of mobile home parks to other uses.

"This protects mobile-home stock," said Mayor Todd McFarren, thanking the crowd of mobile-home-park residents who showed up support of the ordinance for their participation.

Although none of the residents addressed the council on the matter, there was hearty applause when the measure passed.

The city Planning Commission on May 7 unanimously recommended adoption of the regulations.

Under the ordinance, the conversion process provides many safeguards for the residents of mobile home parks when the park owner wants to convert the park to another use.

Rent control for mobile home parks was voted into law by city residents in December's election,

and this ordinance has been perceived as a way to protect a source of less-costly housing in the city.

Under the ordinance, owners would have to let residents know at least 60 days before applying for permission to convert the park to another use. A residents' association has the right to negotiate with the owner to purchase the park, and any proposed conversion would be suspended for six months while such negotiations went on. Current residents have the first right of refusal to buy individual spaces if the residents are buying the owner out.

Owners could also be required to do a number of things to make sure residents are able to relocate to an affordable place, including supplying residents with information about other parks, paying moving expenses or providing rent subsidies for up to two years if people move into apartment houses or into more expensive mobile-home parks.

—Chela Zabin