

# County eases up on mobile homes

Nudged by a state law, Santa Cruz County supervisors approved regulations Tuesday that will allow mobile homes to be installed on lots zoned for single-family residences in the county's unincorporated areas.

Cognizant, however, that it is a potentially explosive issue among homeowners worried about property values and esthetic considerations, the board hedged the regulations with as many restrictions as it felt it could get away with.

The board's action was made necessary by a state law, which becomes effective July 1, that requires counties to allow the installation of "permanent mobile homes on foundations" in single family zone districts.

Planning Director Kris Schenk told the board that, after consultation with county counsel and with other counties, he believed it would be best to adopt a use permit procedure "that considers the compatibility and design aspects of each mobile home permit individually."

Schenk said the state law is not crystal clear as to what restrictions counties can place on mobile home applications, but that it does allow the same regulations that could be applied to regular homes. These would include, he noted, "such features as setbacks, minimum square footage, access and parking, accessory structures and design review as are required for conventional dwellings."

But, he cautioned, "the overall effect of such regulations must not be to preclude mobile homes from locating in single family zone districts."

There are other facets of the state law, County Counsel Dwight Herr said in a report, that allow the county some discretion. It can, for example, designate certain areas to be particularly "compatible" for

mobile home use, although this does not mean, he hastened to add, the county can unilaterally isolate mobile home installations in rigidly defined areas.

Among the conditions attached to the ordinance the board adopted were that only double-wide or multi-sectional mobile homes will be eligible and that a hearing will be held for each application.

Supervisors made it clear that the new law does not mean that forests of mobile homes will be popping up on single family lots. They noted that mobile home applications must go through the county's regular Measure J process, meaning that they will be strictly controlled in numbers.

Under the same regulations, however, if the applicant can demonstrate that the mobile home will constitute "affordable housing" under the county's Measure J standards, he can receive priority processing.

Supervisor Joe Cucchiara took an upbeat view of the situation, saying the new law "takes one direction toward solving the problem of housing" and he believed most of the problems it posed could be overcome by prudent planning.

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