

Mobile home rent increase tied to park maintenance

The owners of the Brookvale mobile home park were awarded a five percent rent hike Thursday night by the Capitola City Council.

But they'll keep the rent increase only if a park maintenance plan acceptable to the park residents is presented to the City Council within the next six months.

The edict came at the end of a 2½ hour hearing that began on Thursday night and concluded at 12:30 a.m. Friday.

The hearing (and one on flood plain zoning in Capitola Village) lasted so long that the council for the first time in a decade, postponed three other public hearings and long list of other actions until a special meeting Tuesday night.

The hearing was the latest of what has become, an annual event — the appeal by either the residents, park owners or, in this case, both — of the decision by the city's Mobile Home Rent Stabilization Board on a rent hike.

This year, the board granted the owners an eight percent hike.

Residents said that was too high, especially since the park owners had cut their maintenance efforts in the park after

getting a five percent increase last year.

At best, the residents told the City Council Thursday night, park owners were entitled to a 3.7 percent hike.

Park owner Abraham Keh and property management agent Bruce Davis said the eight percent award wasn't enough. They had originally sought a 15.63 percent — which would have raised the average space rent in the park by \$30.48 a month.

Davis made it clear to the council and the audience during a rambling 45 minute presentation that the park owners were not going to do any major maintenance unless the monthly space rents were raised to cover the cost.

"If the residents are satisfied with rocks and weeds, fine. We don't live there," said Davis.

That blunt statement angered councilmembers, and apparently provoked them into taking an unusually hard line with the park management.

"I find Davis and Keh altogether, absolutely disgusting," Councilman Dennis Beltram declared. "They are dealing with people's lives and the attitude that they will do nothing in maintaining the park is an absolutely despicable attitude. They have a moral obligation and that is something this body has the right to consider — the care in maintaining a decent place to live. I have no sympathy for that (management) atti-

tude," he added.

A moment later, he added, "... I'd like to give them nothing."

"I pretty well agree with Dennis," Councilman Jerry Clarke said. "The only thing that concerns me is the degradation of the road system. I know it has to be brought up to a state of reasonable repair soon."

"The statement by Mr. Davis that 'we don't have to live there' did it for me," a disgusted Bob Bucher said. "How anyone can say that is beyond me."

The council tried to come up with a way of ensuring that part of a rent increase would be used for road repairs and other maintenance. Keh quietly laughed from his seat in the audience at a suggestion from councilwoman Stephanie Harlan "that we grant 5.5 percent on the condition that they reinstate a maintenance man (fired last year) and that the roads be sealed."

Other councilmembers said they had no confidence that the work would be done unless there was a strong incentive.

Bucher first suggested granting a five percent increase that

would be, in effect, repaid to the residents if no work was done.

Keh, reacting from the audience to the Bucher proposal in a voice probably not audible to the council, said "we'll close the park."

The other councilmembers thought Bucher's rebate proposal was too cumbersome.

They compromised on the five percent raise suggested by Bucher with the provision suggested by Clark that "if after six months they haven't done anything, the knife comes down" — meaning that the rent hike would be cancelled.