

Planning Commission inks approval on tattoo parlor

Body Piercing + Tattooing

RP 10-808

Getting special-use permit signals end of long process to create Freedom Tattoo and Piercing

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For the first time in at least 46 years, a tattoo parlor has been approved to open in Watsonville.

The city Planning Commission on Tuesday voted 7-0 to approve a special-use permit

for applicant Geoff Wells to establish Freedom Tattoo and Piercing at 1910 Freedom Blvd.

It was the end of a long battle for Wells, who started the process of getting approval for the business in 2006. When the Planning Commission's unanimous decision came down, Wells and

several supporters clapped their hands in celebration. Wells said he hopes to open for business by month's end.

Several planning commissioners stated that enough restrictions had been put on the

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The Watsonville Planning Commission approved a special-use permit for a new tattoo parlor at 1910 Freedom Boulevard Tuesday night.

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TATTOO

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business they were comfortable that the tattoo parlor would not have a negative impact on the city.

Tattoo artists must get a Body Artist Permit from the Watsonville Police Department, in which they are fingerprinted and checked for criminal history. Registered sex offenders will not be allowed to get a permit, and Police Chief Terry Medina has the right to deny a permit because of other concerns.

Additionally, Wells has agreed not to operate later than 10 p.m. Under city code, no body art may be applied on any person under the age of 18 unless it is performed in the presence of a parent or legal guardian, and accompanied by a notarized authorization form by the same parent or legal guardian.

Freedom Tattoo and Piercing will be located in what had

previously been a doctor's office, and is expected to have three tattoo rooms, a body-piercing room and a cleaning room. Body artists are required to take a course in dealing with contaminated waste that is produced during the tattooing and piercing process. The special-use permit is good for five years, but the business is subject to annual inspection.

Some citizens have expressed concerns about tattoo parlors having some connection with crime. Watsonville Deputy Police Chief Manny Solano, however, has said there is no evidence to support the contention that tattoo parlors contribute to an increased crime rate. Wells said Tuesday that he would not be in the business of doing tattoos for gang members.

"Because of all these restrictions and conditions, I believe this proposal should move forward," Planning Commissioner Luis Alejo said.

"There are those out there

who figure that Watsonville is going to hell in a handbasket," Planning Commissioner Betty Bobeda said. "But there are enough restrictions and I'm supporting it."

From 1962 until last year, the city had essentially prohibited tattoo parlors by requiring that they be performed under the supervision of a licensed physician, and no new tattoo parlors were established during that time. In 1998, the state established regulations for tattooing, body piercing and permanent cosmetics. In response to a potential conflict between the city code and state law, in September 2007 the city adopted regulations that would permit body-art facilities but with a number of restrictions, including that they be at least 500 feet from any school, park or playground; 750 feet from any other tattoo or body-piercing establishment; and 300 feet from any liquor store or bar.

No members of the public spoke out against the approval of the special-use permit.