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Red-nosed council relents

Santa Cruz snuffs parking meter law

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It's OK now to put change in someone else's expired parking meter in Santa Cruz, even if you're not a clown.

The Santa Cruz City Council, sporting red ball-noses, voted unanimously Tuesday to dump the city law that made "unauthorized" meter-feeding illegal. The law was rescinded by "emergency

ordinance," meaning the action is effective immediately.

Surf City's leaders acknowledged the obscure yet not unusual law had earned Santa Cruz a pie in the face this month after local clown Mr. Twister was slapped with a ticket.

"The city has to raise money through parking, but it's clear that this law has become a public relations disaster," Vice Mayor

Mike Rotkin said.

Indeed, Mayor Katherine Beiers said she has received about 40 letters from people across the country blasting the city for citing a clown for kindness and vowing never to visit.

"Right on the face of it, the law makes no sense," Beiers said.

City Manager Richard Wilson, also in ball-nose, already had ordered the \$13 charge against Mr.

Twister dropped.

Mr. Twister, who is 26-year-old Cory McDonald behind the colorful face paint, twisted balloon animals for the council members and reveled in his victory over the "anti-Good Samaritan law."

"The law was against my moral code," the clown said, honking and twisting balloons. "I saw a problem in the community, and I was always told 'you can be a part of the problem or you can be part of the solution.'"

He was joined by fellow clown

Sprinkles, also known as Anna Horn, and attorney Ben Rice, who had taken up his cause free of charge — "pro-Bozo," as he calls it. Rice helped produce bumper stickers with the clown's image that said "Mr. Twister Feed My Meter."

"Cory McDonald is a gift to us," Rice said. "His getting a ticket has brought to all our attention that this ridiculous law is on the books. I'd like to urge you to vote

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this unfriendly law out of Santa Cruz."

Community support has been overwhelming for Mr. Twister since news of his citation. In one day after a media circus reported on the matter, people gave the clown \$272 to continue his good deeds.

"I think Mr. Twister has touched a heartstring," said Tom Beale of La Selva Beach. "Some-

thing about him touches people."

Councilman Scott Kennedy jokingly asked whether Mr. Twister was going to visit the county tax assessor to help people who are late on their taxes. He then presented the clown with a city parking meter, complete with ball-nose and blue eyes.

With the law now gone, will Mr. Twister continue his meter-feeding crusade to spare forgetful motorists \$12?

"Of course," the clown said.