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Dress Code Hearing Reveals Variety Of Opinions

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Last night's two-hour hearing on dress code proposals in the Santa Cruz High School District revealed a wide array of opinions among students, educators and parents.

Some 50 persons attended the special meeting of the Santa Cruz City Board of Education that was called to give the public

an opportunity to present thoughts on the code, and especially on provisions dealing with beards and hair length.

Trustee Eugene Adams, who presided, declared that the board faces the task of adopting a policy that will be "reasonable" and that will not violate the constitutional liberties of students and their parents.

He noted that the courts have

held that school boards may adopt rules for student conduct, dress and grooming that will promote the educational process without invading personal rights. He added, however, "every liberty has a correlative responsibility."

The board will weigh carefully all of the evidence, including remarks at last night's meeting, petitions, letters, and the transcript of the court hearing

on the Soquel High School haircut case involving Richard Smiley, Adams said.

In the Smiley case, the superior court upheld the Soquel High dress policy and the action of officials in suspending Smiley, a 15-year-old freshman, until he got a haircut.

The board also will consider the dress code committee's reports and opinions of county

counsel in reaching a decision, Adams said.

Superintendent Denzil Morrissey, who read the proposed policy, said the committee was "not in unanimous agreement" on provisions that "boys' hair shall be clean and neatly groomed" and "boys shall be neatly shaven."

Two alternatives were presented. The first, on hair length,

states: "Hair will be neatly trimmed and properly groomed. Hair may not hang over the eyebrows or over the top of the ears. Hair may not be longer than the top of the collar of a normal dress shirt. Sideburns may extend to the bottom of the ear."

The second, on beards, states:

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"Boys shall be cleanly shaven. Mustaches are permissible."

Speaking for a stricter policy, Mrs. George Darling declared, "Good standards reflect self-respect and respect for the school." Proper dress is important for future employment, she said.

Her comments were echoed by a Soquel High student who stated that the code will provide "responsibility for the students and authority for the faculty. He said that only a small minority of Soquel students have abused the school's hair length policy, but this has created problems for other students and for teachers.

However, Charles Natanson, Santa Cruz High School student body president, disagreed. He said long hair has no bearing on a student's performance, but is an expression of individual feelings and emotions.

His comment was seconded by Dr. Richard Jones, UCSC professor.

Natanson conceded that he believes long hair can be uncomfortable and ugly," but he stated "those with long hair

present no problems and have no undesirable attributes." bel against established standards will do so regardless of their appearance, he said.

He asked, "Is long hair dangerous or harmful or interruptive enough that we can stop it? Is there positive evidence against it so that we cannot allow these students to express their own feeling and own differences with the adult world?"

Natanson's views were reinforced by Aaron Nelson, Santa Cruz High School principal, who observed that the staff is "pretty well split" on the issue. But he said he knows of no teacher who says long hair interferes with the educational process, although some instructors personally dislike it.

He suggested the whole issue boils down to a question of personal tastes.

There are probably 20 or 25 boys at Santa Cruz High, whose hair approaches shoulder length, Nelson said. He said the critical question is whether a particular style of dress or grooming interferes with the school's educational processes. He suggested there is no inter-

ference and cited participation in all of the school's activities by girls with long hair.

Strong support for a strict code was voiced by Barbara Toshikian, home economics instructor at Mission Hill Junior High School. She asked, "Since when have we forced boys to resort to long hair in order to communicate with us?" She said students without long hair can communicate, and she added, "Parents and teachers should keep their eyes and ears open. All students are communicating and trying to tell us something. We must listen."

Problems have arisen in student discipline and class control, Mrs. Toshikian continued, because of long hair and short skirts. She cited the disruptions that occur in her class when boys with long hair walk near the classroom. Said she, "The kids do get upset at the junior high level." The policy is needed to reinforce the authority of the teacher, she added.

Mrs. Toshikian noted that the problem never can be solved so that everyone will be happy. Said she, "But I'm tired of the minority always being heard at the expense of the majority. We