

Hearing Continued

Angry Residents Protest Hidden Beach Access Plan

A county proposal calling for public access improvements to Hidden Beach in Rio del Mar was continued to Feb. 25 by the County Sanitation District Board Thursday, who were confronted by some 30 angry residents.

The sanitation district is involved in the county parks project since one of its sewer lines runs underneath the beach to its RDM sewage pump station. The hearing was continued since county Parks Director Larry Norris was out of town and couldn't attend.

That didn't, however, stop the wrath of residents from making their dissatisfaction known over the proposal.

The project, funded by the state Coastal Conservancy, has been described a high priority project. It would provide a coastal access trail and public restrooms to Hidden Beach, which is now accessible only to private residents.

Frank O'Connell, a director with the Rio del Mar Improvement Association, termed the proposal a "joke" and in "total conflict" with what the residents want.

"This proposal sounds like you're opening up a beach to local residents. It's a joke if you think you're doing us a favor," O'Connell charged.

County parks spokesman Roy Holmberg managed to answer a few of the residents' questions. Residents were glad to hear no provisions for parking would be built, but were unhappy when Holmberg said the beach was anticipated to be open to the public 24 hours a day.

Noel Atkinson, representing the Seascape Improvement Association and the Sumner Woods Homeowners Association, maintained that the more parks there are, increased crime follows.

"We don't want dope trade, vandalism or a lot of nudity out there," he said, in questioning the need of another neighborhood park, as well as the cost to maintain it by the county.

RDM Improvement Association President Bob Curtiss told sanitation directors that the Council of

Improvement Associations had unanimously opposed the project. The Council represents all the improvement associations in the area.

In other business, storm damage reports were made. Major damage occurred to an 18-inch sewer line under Aptos Creek Bridge, as well as to a line at Moosehead and Spreckles Drive, said Sanitation Engineer Don Porath.

Flooding also occurred at virtually all the district's pump stations. Temporary repairs, however, have been made.

Sanitation directors set a special meeting for 4:30 p.m. Monday to receive funding information regarding damage repairs. It will be held in the Public Works conference room in the fourth floor of the County Center.