

Council backs bike route move, security funding

Rental inspection fees,
variable parking rates also pass

By J.M. BROWN

jbrown@santacruzsentinel.com

1-12-11

SANTA CRUZ — The official Pacific Coast Bike Route will be moved from vehicle-heavy Mission Street to pedestrian-heavy West Cliff Drive, but a council member who lives near the scenic drive overlooking Monterey Bay has called for a safety study.

The City Council on Tuesday approved a resolution in favor of the Regional Transportation Commission's effort to relocate the Santa Cruz portion of the 1,800-mile route stretching from British Columbia to Southern California, a move also supported by Caltrans. The route currently takes touring bicyclists from Highway 1 onto Mission Street, where two bicyclists have been fatally struck by vehicles in recent years.

"I think it's quite brilliant," Councilwoman Katherine Beiers, who lives near West Cliff Drive, said of the route's relocation. "But we're leading bicyclists to a very busy two-and-a-half miles."

Beiers made a motion, agreed to by other council members, to ask bicycle committees for the city and Regional Transportation Commission

**'I think
it's quite
brilliant. But
we're leading
bicyclists to
a very busy
two-and-a-half
miles.'**

KATHERINE BEIERS,
councilwoman, on
moving the Pacific
Coast Bike Route to
West Cliff Drive

SEE COUNCIL ON B3

COUNCIL

Continued from B1

to study ways to improve safety on West Cliff Drive's multi-use path shared by bicyclists and pedestrians. She said traffic has increased exponentially in recent years. She said she witnessed a collision Tuesday between a bicyclist and a woman pushing a stroller.

Chris Schneider, the assistant director of public works, said many of the cyclists who use West Cliff Drive are not high-speed riders and, in relation to the bike route moving, "I don't see this as being an issue for West Cliff other than what currently exists."

Also Tuesday, the council approved a fee schedule for a

controversial rental inspection ordinance, which will require property owners to register rental units with the city at an annual cost of \$45 with an additional minimum \$20 fee if the property has to be inspected.

Councilman Tony Madrigal voted against the fees, just as he did last year when he opposed the ordinance establishing the inspection program designed to identify and correct illegal units. He predicts the measure, triggered by the city's agreement with UC Santa Cruz to limit university expansion, will increase costs for renters, considering some property owners will pass costs of the program onto tenants.

The council also passed new variable rates for park-

ing meters and pay spaces for motorists using a new pay-by-phone program offered by the service Parkmobile. The city's parking manager said the new rates will help motorists avoid parking tickets by using their cell phone to pay a premium rate for staying beyond the time limit of some meters and pay spaces downtown and in the beach area.

The council also approved using redevelopment funds for the ongoing employment of First Alarm security guards downtown, which costs \$63,000 annually, and a community service officer. The Police Department is using the guards to supplement officers during the day, as police focus their attention on downtown at night.

Police Chief Kevin Vogel said the guards, who cost

about 25 percent less than a community service officer, have made 4,500 contacts downtown from early September to late December, with half of the cases relating to smoking on Pacific Avenue or bicycling on sidewalks or in the wrong direction. About 500 contacts were for aggressive panhandling.

On Tuesday, free-speech advocate Robert Norse and others challenged Mayor Ryan Coonerty's decision to appoint a new public comment period at 5:30 on regular council meeting days and limit individual speakers to two minutes. Due to an appellate court ruling, the city must return to federal court this spring to fight a suit Norse filed after being ejected from a council meeting in 2002.