

# Camp Paradise II must surrender Aptos site

By DAN WHITE

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Camp Paradise II is getting booted from the back yard of a church that has hosted the campers since March.

The county last week red-tagged the camp, home to about a dozen campers, because of a small but unexplained fire on the church grounds. But the camp, even before the fire, had learned that it would have to leave by October.

The Rev. Stan Abraham of Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, near Cabrillo College, had withdrawn a church application to amend its use permit to let the campers stay. Abraham said the church and camp can't afford county-required improvements — from a grease trap to concrete slabs to a fire hydrant.

Neighbors say campers forced themselves into the neighborhood, flouted zoning rules and trampled their rights. They accused the county of ignoring their concerns until now. Campers say they are falling victim to county bureaucracy.

Supervisor Ellen Pirie, whose district includes Aptos, said neighbors have legitimate concerns. She said the recent fire, while extinguished quickly, was scary for the neighborhood.

A fire inspector reported the matter to the county, which red-tagged the camp.

Campers argued the fire had nothing to do

with them and said it was far from where they sleep.

Pirie said the campers were treated fairly, and given clear information about sanitation and fire-safety requirements.

Camp founder Larry Templeton, who describes himself as a recovering addict, said he has no idea where to go next.

"The county has put stipulations on the campground which there's no way we can meet," he said. "We can't put in a fire hydrant that pumps 30,000 gallons per minute. They want all slabs for the tent, and concrete slabs under the camper (vehicles.) They want a grease trap in the kitchen of the church, and we don't even use that kitchen."

He said the camp collective's assets are around \$1,000, and that meeting all county requirements would cost 50 times that.

The neighbors say they've been pushed around.

"It's going away," neighbor Cindy Jouras said. "That pretty much was the hope. What more can be said? The bottom line is that we had an individual trying to put in a campsite in an area that was not zoned for camping."

Complaints included public urination, transients wandering into the neighborhood, and scuffles between the camp dog and a neighbor's dog. A sheriff's deputy said he saw someone try to sneak alcohol into the self-described booze

and drug-free camp.

Mount Calvary pastor Stan Abraham said the closure will be "a great tragedy. The message of the Gospel and Jesus Christ is care and compassion of the poor and outcasts, to welcome the stranger. And we do that, but then the government says, 'it's all right if you do that, but this has to be the way you do it.' And then it becomes an infringement on the free exercise of our religion."

He said the camp has not caused problems, that campers cleaned the grounds and participated in services.

Abraham called some of the county rules "silly," including bathrooms for the disabled in the church, which the campers use. "It's not a public campground. We're only talking about a dozen people."

The campers were forced off the banks of the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz late last year when high waters flooded the camp.

The flood ended a long, nationally publicized standoff with the city. The camp, run by Templeton, was a divisive issue for those who credited the group with cleaning up a formerly drug-infested area called "Heroin Alley," and others who accused them of lying about their eco-friendly, drug and booze-free status.

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