

Local

✓CF La Selva Beach RP 6/27/91 P. 11 Those cabooses in La Selva must go, say planners

By LANE WALLACE
STAFF WRITER

A bid to allow railroad cabooses on residential land near the beach in La Selva Beach was denied yesterday by Santa Cruz County planning commissioners.

The commission's decision could be the final action in what has been a hot topic in La Selva Beach since last fall: whether the two cabooses John and Julia King placed on their land off Magarita Road last fall are art and historical relics, or attractive nuisances that invite vandals.

The Kings have 10 days to appeal to the final legislative authority on the issue, the Board of Supervisors. After the hearing yesterday, King said, "It's my wife's project," and said he didn't know if they would appeal to the supervisors.

The issue prompted petition drives on both sides and legal action. The county got a restraining order prohibiting more cabooses from being installed, and two opponents of the cabooses hired attorneys for yesterday's hearing. The Planning Commission decision upheld the Zoning Administrator's denial of the Kings' application for permits, filed after two cabooses went in last fall. The Kings were seeking approval for a third caboose.

Planning commissioners and most caboose opponents who spoke during the two-hour hearing complained that the cabooses have been sprayed with graffiti, broken into, climbed on and the restrooms vandalized. Some speakers said they believed youths were using the cabooses as a place to smoke marijuana and use drugs.

"If I was a young guy still in my drinking days, I'd be up in the cabooses tearing them apart," said Commissioner Ted Durkee.

The cabooses "are not something they (the Kings) can keep their eye on," said Durkee. The Kings live a quarter-mile from the cabooses on a separate parcel.

Durkee became agitated early in the meeting when questioning Mitchell Page, King's attorney, about plans to maintain the cabooses.

Page said King was limited because the county slapped a red-tag (stop-work) order on the cabooses shortly after they were installed on the property.

Page said King can't get a neighbor to watch the property, because the nearest neighbor, James Fairbanks, is a strident opponent of the cabooses and one of the foes who hired an attorney.

"It's not ordinary vandalism," King said. "Somebody blew out those (bullet-proof) windows with a gun." He said he wants to restore the cabooses and eventually spend some time in them.

Commissioner Robert Bremner said he visited the cabooses this week and found obscene words written on the cars, broken glass on the ground, and a caboose unlocked.

"I will go down there myself and pick up the glass if somebody doesn't," Bremner said.

Page and King assured him the glass would be picked up.

Of nine speakers, Gary Greene, a friend of the Kings, was the only one speaking on their behalf. Greene, a self-described railroad buff, said few of the people complaining about the cabooses can see them from their homes.