

# Shuttle-lot vote rekindles Village parking flap

By BOB SMITH

More than any other issue in the 1980s, the parking woes of Capitola Village have dominated the meetings of the Capitola City Council.

The council has spent hundreds of manhours wrestling with the problems of a community laid out in the days of the horse-and-buggy and now trying to live with the highly mechanized lifestyles the 1980's and beyond.

More than \$2 million has been spent by the city so far in buying land and developing a transportation network designed to lure the Village shopper or summer beach enthusiast into leaving his car outside the congested Village.

But not everyone is cheering

the council, as evidenced Thursday night when about 30 people turned up to challenge the city's plans to build a new shuttle bus parking lot on McGregor Drive and then bus visitors into Capitola Village.

The council voted 4-1 to go ahead with its plans to construct a 150-space parking lot on the property near the entrance to New Brighton Beach State Park. Most of the construction costs will come from a \$220,000 federal grant obtained by the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District.

But that decision will be reviewed again when final plans come back to the council for review.

The council also issued a rebuke of sorts to Police Chief

Bob Allen and told him to stop ticketing cars moved only a couple of parking space every two hours.

Allen had issued orders to the city's code enforcement officers, telling them to issue citations when cars do not leave the Village after staying for two hours.

The policy was challenged three weeks ago by Councilman Dennis Beltram, an attorney, and again last week by attorney Leola Lapidés, who has an office in Beltram's Capitola Avenue office building.

She complained of watching a code enforcement officer write a parking ticket for her car after it was moved one winter day from one space to another a couple of feet away.

The upshot of the discussion, will be a review by city staff of the two-hour parking limit in the Village.

Most of the discussion Thursday centered around the city plan to build a new shuttle bus parking lot on McGregor Drive.

The overwhelming majority of those who spoke Thursday night thought the proposal will be unworkable, adversely impact New Brighton Beach State Park and magnify the traffic problems perceived by neighbors in the Pinetree Lane and Cliffwood Heights areas.

The only supporter who spoke from the audience was Village businesswoman Carin Mudgett who, although she originally opposed the \$465,000 purchase of the property, urged the coun-

cil to go ahead with the lot's construction.

City Public Works Director Craig French told the council and audience Thursday night that plans call for the construction of the 150-space, lighted parking lot on approximately three-quarters of an acre of land next to the roadway. The perimeter of the lot would be heavily landscaped with "native" plants and a berm constructed between the roadway and the parking lot.

The remainder of the 4.65 acre lot would be left undeveloped at the present time, although the state parks department is asking the city for a right of way through the property for a new entrance to the state park.

Audience members expressed several concerns with the lot, including traffic, location and usage.

"It is not right for the city make a quick fix of its parking problem by creating more problems for the adjoining community," Alarik Rosenlund of New Brighton Road told the council.

"Park Avenue (traffic) is a mess," added Cliffwood Heights resident Ciro Milazzo. "But probably a bigger concern is whether this is the right location (for a parking lot). Most people will be coming from San Jose and they won't drive out of Capitola to find a place to park."

The land should be part of the  
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state parks system. "State parks wanted the land," Milazzo asserted, "to expand the park . . . and now we are taking that land."

"The state has never showed any interest in acquiring that property," retorted Capitola Mayor Michael Routh.

City Manager Steve Burrell said he had talked with State Parks District Superintendent Richard Menefee about the construction of the lot.

"His concern was that people would park in the (free) city lot and then walk into the beach. But they can now park along McGregor and Coronado Avenue and walk into the park. It will be very hard to keep people from walking into the park," Burrell said.

Jim Fife, supervising park ranger for the park told the council in the absence of Menefee, who was ill Thursday night, that the state staff is also concerned about late night visitors parking in the city lot and then walking into the state park.

"New Brighton closes at 10 p.m.," Fife said, "and I would hope that the lot would close at the same time."

He warned that the city lot might become an overflow lot for the park on busy summer weekends.

"We do close our lot on weekends and people will go to your lot. The parking area is only 500 feet from our day use lot."

Cliffwood Heights resident Jerry White also questioned the usage of the lot. "I think you will find that it will be 80 percent (New Brighton) beach

usage and 20 percent shuttle bus — if they can find it."

Pinetree Lane resident Mary Jean Shamlain urged the council to consider a right turn lane for slow-moving traffic into and out of the proposed parking lot.

Councilwoman Stephanie Harlan called for an indefinite delay in approving the lot's construction, seeking a feasibility study and the results of a traffic study.

"I would ask that we table this and bring it back when we have the traffic study.

"We don't have a feasibility study on the usage of the lot," she said, adding that she was worried that traffic into the lot would back up through the Park-McGregor intersection and onto the freeway.

"We don't know if this plan will work," she added. "I would rather study it than find out later that it won't work. It is in the wrong location."

"It's the only place to put it," Councilman Bob Bucher retorted.

And when Harlan again pleaded for a delay, saying she had voted for the property purchase but now wanted a second look, she was bluntly told by Councilman Jerry Clarke that she should have voiced her objections at the time of purchase — not now.

Other councilmen agreed with the assessment that the city should not delay action on the lot.

"First of all," continued Councilman Dennis Beltram, "we have to remember that the purchase of this land for parking is part of the overall Village parking scheme. It's very clear that if we don't provide

the parking, the shuttle bus will disappear and I'm not willing to scrap the shuttle bus system," Beltram said.

Clarke added: "I agree with Bucher and Beltram that a feasibility study would be of little use. Time is of the essence and I think there can be a system set up so we can control the usage of the lot.

"All in all, I think we should move forward as rapidly as possible," Clarke added. "If it doesn't work, the land is quite valuable and we will end up with a profit down the line."

Mayor Michael Routh was the only other member of the council who seemed to offer some hope to the parking lot opponents. "It's only a preliminary plan; not final approval," he told the audience "Certainly I have some concerns about the people finding it. I really think that (city) staff has to look closely at these concerns. I don't want to be accused of doing the same thing that we are fighting in Wingspread. I would rather delay it one summer and not operate a shuttle bus," Routh added.

But when it came to a vote Routh voted with the council majority.