

Fence proposed around Town Clock

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SANTA CRUZ — People can visit Lincoln's memorial in Washington, D.C., but they don't have the right to climb up and sleep in his lap, City Councilman John Mahaney said Tuesday, proposing to fence in the beleaguered Town Clock.

The city has been besieged by citizen complaints about the unsightly conditions at the downtown clock created by a scraggly group of protesters. Mayor Jane Yokoyama said veteran parks maintenance workers have called it one of the worst messes they've faced.

The clock has been littered by debris, clothing and bedrolls from the protesters who began their vigil in opposition to the Middle East war and now are continuing it as a vigil for world peace.

But Yokoyama and Vice-Mayor Don Lane would not go along with Mahaney's proposal to build a fence around the clock. Instead they offered an alternative plan to refer the issue to the Parks and Recreation Commission for ideas on how to accommodate public expression and still keep the area tidy.

Mahaney and Louis Rittenhouse, who favored the fence, went along with the substitute plan. Neal Coonerty was absent.

Rittenhouse urged that the commission come up with an answer, pronto. "We're asking property owners and fi-

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— *Councilman Scott Kennedy*

nancial institutions to put up millions and millions of dollars to rebuild downtown. We've promised them that we will deal with the problems that used to exist on the mall.

"If we can't correct the problems at the Town Clock, how can we say we can solve the problems on Pacific Avenue?" Rittenhouse asked.

Katherine Beiers and Scott Kennedy opposed the action.

"It's wishful thinking that you can just legislate out of public view people you find visually unappealing," Kennedy said.

Kennedy said he has stood on the clock in the past to see public events and that his children have put their feet in the fountain. "I do not think that is disrespectful," Kennedy said.

Beiers said she recently returned from a visit to the nation's capitol and was struck by the public use of the monuments.

"Lincoln, of all people, would be the

most offended at the idea of erecting a fence around a monument," Beiers said, referring to Mahaney's earlier analogy.

"I ran by the Vietnam Memorial at 6 o'clock in the morning and saw the homeless huddled there in such a way as to catch the morning sun.

"I also saw children playing and business people eating their lunches at the monuments. There's room for everybody in Washington, D.C. and there's room for everybody here, too," Beiers said.

"Gosh, all I wanted to do was to put up a chain-link fence," said Mahaney. "I'm not trying to infringe on anybody's rights."

He said he was motivated by the number of citizen complaints, including one from an Italian woman who told him she was among those who purchased a brick for \$50 to help build the clock as part of the city's 1976 Bicentennial celebration. The woman had the brick inscribed with her late husband's name as a memorial.

"Now she wants to know if she can take the brick back," Mahaney said.

"People can protest there, that's fine," said Mahaney. "But I don't think they have the right to climb all over it and sit on it and sleep in it," Mahaney said.

The audience was decidedly against Mahaney's proposal.

Wendy Chapkis said the proposal was a local example of what she called an alarming national trend to gut the Bill of Rights.

"Our rights can't be based on public-opinion polls or on the number of phone calls (to City Hall)," Chapkis said.

"Dissent is disorderly; dissent doesn't always look nice," she added.

Robert Norse, who has used the clock to protest the city's camping ban and to stage a protest soup kitchen for the homeless, lambasted the council.

"Testosterone-intoxicated city officials are scrambling for excuses to drive unfashionable protesters — some homeless, some not — from the Town Clock at night," Norse charged. He called the progressives "chameleons." The Parks and Recreation Commission recently discussed imposing closing hours at the clock as are in place at city parks and recreation areas, but took no action. Yokoyama said the full commission was not present at that time and she believes they want to do something to deal with the situation.