

SJM 1/11/92 A-1 ANTI-BIAS LAW City seeks equality for all, regardless of appearance

**Santa Cruz loves you
even if your hair's blue**

By Paul Rogers

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If you're an overweight Dead-head who's recently had a sex change operation, the Santa Cruz City Council wants to make your life a little easier.

Council members are considering a far-reaching ordinance that would ban discrimination against tall people, short people, fat people, people with funny clothes and people with unusual hairstyles.

If approved Feb. 11, the ordinance would make Santa Cruz the first city in California to outlaw landlords or employers from refusing jobs or housing to people because they didn't like their weight, wardrobe or grooming habits.

"We're trying to offer equal opportunities to all our citizens," said Councilman Neal Coonerty, who drew up the proposal.

Coonerty's ordinance also would

offer protection for gays, lesbians and — unlike most other cities with similar sex discrimination ordinances, transsexuals.

There would be some exceptions. Grooming that causes health hazards would not be protected. And employers would be allowed to impose legitimate job standards.

Even in the city famous for its hippies, punks and surfers, the ordinance is raising some eyebrows.

"This is just going to make people look at us and say 'There's another nutty thing Santa Cruz is up to,'" groaned John Mahaney, one of two council conservatives.

Coonerty is a longtime small business owner who argues the rules will only improve the quality of workers hired in Santa Cruz. And, like most of the other members of the liberal-dominated city council, he tips the scales at over 200 pounds.

"I hope my bringing this up isn't a conflict of interest," he joked.