

SC Introduces Water Conservation Mandate

Water Supply - 1980 - 1989

An ordinance to curb flagrant waste of water was introduced Tuesday by the Santa Cruz City Council for possible adoption Dec. 22.

But the introduction was on a 4 to 3 vote, with Vice Mayor Bruce Van Allen opposing it because he wants stricter regulations, Joe Ghio calling it "big brotherism," and John Mahaney claiming some of the ordinance provisions appear to him to be "unenforceable."

The majority votes were cast by Mayor Michael Rotkin, John Laird, Mardi Wormhoudt and Spiro Mellis.

Mellis explained his vote by saying: "This ordinance may not be perfect, but it's a start."

The ordinance would forbid irrigation uses that allow water to run to waste, operation of any ornamental fountain, car wash or other such structure unless the water for such use is recycled, washing of cars, boats, buildings or sidewalks without the use of a quick-acting positive shut-off nozzle on the hose.

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Violators would be subject to having their water disconnected.

The ordinance was recommended by Morris Allen, Santa Cruz water director, and the city Water Commission.

The ordinance would complement the highly successful education program against wasting water which the city is conducting in the schools, Allen said.

Mahaney questioned the enforceability of the ordinance, especially outside the city, and City Attorney Rodney Atchison agreed that customers outside the city could not be cited for

water waste.

The City Council requested Rotkin to contact the Board of Supervisors and other jurisdictions to get them to adopt the same type of ordinance under which those who waste water could be cited.

Van Allen said the ordinance does not get at structural waste of water and that it does not provide rates that encourage conservation.

Ghio said: "This is big brotherism. Discouraging waste of water is an education program, not a law process."

Wormhoudt said: "We're spending \$200,000 on an environmental impact report for a dam that would cost millions of dollars. So we have an absolute obligation to see that water is not used in a wasteful way."

The city staff will come back with additional information on how shower heads, low-flush toilets and other devices may be used to insure less use of water.