

Filmmakers can still work for free in city

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SANTA CRUZ — Movie production companies can continue to film in the city for free under a ruling passed Tuesday by the City Council.

The council voted 4-3 to charge no fee to companies using Santa Cruz as a backdrop for their films.

City Manager Richard Wilson had suggested a \$100 per day fee be charged. The fee would have produced some revenue for

the city treasury, but would not have been enough to discourage producers from making films in Santa Cruz, said Wilson.

Council members Michael Rotkin, Mardi Wormhoudt and Jane Weed cast dissenting votes.

Motion Picture Council Director Kristan Wagner had written a letter to the council, stating "fees charged to the industry as a revenue producing source for city coffers are thought to be a deterrent to film companies when considering California locations."

Industry representatives say millions of dollars are lost in California each year to other states that lure film companies by rolling out red carpets for production crews.

Jane Park, assistant director of the Santa Cruz County Convention and Visitor's Bureau, told the council, "A fee of \$100 may seem very small, but it is not an encouragement" to film companies.

She said the money spent by film companies in local businesses more than offsets the lack of a fee.

Two feature films made last year in Santa Cruz together generated \$3.5 million for the local economy, Park estimated.

That figure included payments for 150 motel rooms for a 10-week period, 800 local extras, painters, carpenters, secretaries and other workers, plus \$12,000 in supplies from a local lumber company.

"The market is extremely competitive," said Park.