

Trail proposal goes before supervisors

Trails
By MAY WONG
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — A proposal that will limit the county's power to obtain private land for public trails will be considered by the Board of Supervisors Tuesday.

It comes as a growing number of property owners from throughout the county are banding together to speak against a proposed web of trails from Davenport to Watsonville.

Landowners fear the trail network will mean lost privacy, vandalism and reduced property values. They also oppose the county's authority to deny building or development approvals unless the applicant agrees to dedicate part of his land for a trail.

The county calls it exaction. Property owners consider it extortion.

"What it boils down to is a land

10-31-93
grab by governmental agencies," said Summit homeowner Robbie Norman.

Aware of the rising controversy, county officials are proposing to limit that power, which was written into county codes in the 1970s. Its use "has been fairly limited," county staff reports said. More specific figures were not available Saturday.

Officials in the county planning and parks departments are recommending the Board of Supervisors restrict that authority to applications for land division or commercial/industrial development. If approved, the county would no longer be able to make trail easements a condition for single family building permits.

"If we take these policies out, it should allay a lot of the concerns that people have," Supervisor Jan

Please see TRAILS — A1

Trails proposal

Continued from Page A1

Beautz said Saturday. "If it's not in the document, then we can't do it, not that we would've ever used it."

Homeowners throughout the county are holding small neighborhood meetings to discuss the proposed trails plan now on the drawing table before a county advisory committee. Many have joined the group, Citizens for Responsible Land Use, formed about two months ago to monitor the plan. The group hired an attorney two weeks ago to review the county's actions.

"We are by no means extrem-

ists," said group spokesman Nick Vrolyk. "We are just very concerned about the exaction process, and we feel it needs to be dealt with at this time so we know our rights won't be taken away from us."

Vrolyk says the group is reviewing the county's proposal to limit its exaction policy. So far, it appears to not go as far as landowners would like, he said.

"But I think we're reasonable, and I think there is a meeting in the middle for all parties where we feel our property rights are protected and we're not restricting the

county's goals too, such as setting aside property for parks and other recreation areas."

The proposed trails master plan stems from a 1972 plan that the county Trails Advisory Committee is revising. The new plan will serve as a blueprint for implementing a trails network linking parks in Santa Cruz, Monterey, Santa Clara and San Mateo counties.

A map of the proposed trails will be discussed at the committee meeting at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Scout Center in Harvey West Park, Santa Cruz.