

Historic hot dog stand passes muster

By JAMIE MARKS

Sentinel Staff Writer

WATSONVILLE — The City Council decided Tuesday night it liked the looks of the popular red and white hot dog stand with the neon puppy dog on top, and approved its relocation to Union and Beach streets.

After more than an hour of debate, the council voted unanimously to allow Pauline and James Taylor to rebuild their landmark hot dog stand on a new lot a block away from the corner at Maple and Union streets they've held for the past 34 years.

The main difference is that the new stand will be constructed of cement blocks with a smooth finish. In the end, it will resemble the stand's present metal building, which didn't cut the mustard with the city's Design Review Commission.

The Taylors had been rebuffed in November at the Design Review Commission's meeting after they proposed a building which was essentially the same as it's been for all these years — a small red and white metal building.

Several members of the Design

Some Watsonville officials don't relish look

Review Commission explained to the council why they didn't relish the design. Carlos Garcia said, "It's imperative you understand our reasoning for turning this down. We oppose it as currently designed because it does nothing to enhance the beauty of our city."

Garcia and other commissioners reviewed a plan for a metal, 16-by-22-foot building, with some landscaping and 16 parking spaces, on a vacant parcel next to a bank.

Councilman Vido Deretich asked Garcia, "Do you honestly believe this plan is doing nothing compared with that muddy lot that's been there 30 years?" Garcia answered yes.

Councilman Dennis Osmer disagreed, saying the stand "has a niche in downtown. The stand in Visalia has been honored as a period piece, and when you talk about what fits in you have to take that into consideration."

In a tempered but impassioned plea to the council, Pauline Taylor

said, "We feel it's important to retain our existing style of building. When we moved in Visalia, even though it was the same style and just across the street, people still asked where we relocated.

"This is not an application for a greasy spoon, hole-in-the-wall facility. It is a classy installation — quite possibly the most deluxe hot dog stand in the United States," Taylor said.

She pointed out the city of Visalia honored their '50s style hot dog stand as a historical structure.

The Watsonville stand is one of three owned by the Taylors. For the past 25 years, the city officials have held talks with the Taylors to buy their parcel for additional parking.

"At the city's request, and at great expense, we have made countless trips to discuss relocation, only for the city to decide each time that they could not afford to relocate us," Taylor said.

Harry Tow, a consultant for the Taylors, said, "This represents a no-cost relocation for your redevelopment — and it's a site you may need for your civic center expansion."

At a time when the rest of downtown has been in a slump, the hot dog stand has represented one of the most successful enterprises in the area. Even the Central Business Improvement District came out to support the hot dog stand. Andy Blake, president of the improvement district, called Taylor's a "tradition in Watsonville. At least the scheme should remain intact."

Mayor Betty Murphy initially wanted to refer the proposal to the Design Review Commission again because the Taylors had conceded to the major change of building a cement and stucco building, instead of metal. She thought the design change warranted a review by the commission.

But Councilman Deretich said, "They paid \$50 for their appeal. We should do something with it tonight."

The council unanimously upheld the Taylors appeal and approved the relocation.