

Miss California Pageant organizers to approach council over protests

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SANTA CRUZ — Miss California Pageant organizers will approach the City Council Tuesday with their concerns over protests of the annual pageant by women's liberation groups.

Pageant Executive Director Tom Cutting said the council will be asked what it can do to "prevent harassment" of pageant participants by demonstrators in the Myth California event — a street pageant sponsored by feminists that mocks the beauty contest.

Cutting said Miss California organizers are still considering moving the pageant out of town.

Organizers said they are considering the move elsewhere not only on account of the yearly protests, but because facilities could be better than the Civic Auditorium, where the

pageant is held each year. The finals have been televised yearly.

Some say the Miss California Pageant will be met by protesters no matter where it goes.

"I hope they stay in town," commented Mayor John Laird. "It's my view that there are going to be demonstrations wherever they go. If there are general problems with the facility, we should try to work out those problems."

Laird said, if the pageant remains in Santa Cruz, there should be "a clear area" for demonstrators across the street from the auditorium so the protest won't interfere with the pageant.

While Laird notes he does not support the Miss California Pageant, he recognizes "there is a huge volunteer network of Santa Cruzans

that support it...they're members of the community, and they have a right to express themselves too."

Monday night's street protest was brought inside the auditorium by several men who jumped on the stage during the finale of the televised Miss California event.

Myth California organizer Ann Simonton said Miss California will be protested "wherever" she goes.

"I feel women all over the state and country are fed up with the crippling mold Miss California perpetuates."

Simonton agreed Miss California has given Santa Cruz feminists "a reason to organize."

"I feel it (Miss California) definitely has helped bring the women's movement together in this community."