

Santa Cruz Clamps Down

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report uses codewords to describe the concerns of area residents and businesses about littering, which are "echoed by the Police Department and the Parks and Recreation Department to address the issue of long term parking on Sylvania Street and on Coral Street from Limekiln Street to Harvey West Boulevard. This parking results in health and sanitation concerns as well as traffic safety issues."

But the "health" of homeless people is not considered. This tiny, staff-inspired banishment of the vehicularly-housed will not drive them from the area. They will just be driven into another area, probably in front of a residence or a business. Crowding will increase, and complaints from residents and businesses will no doubt increase as well.

Sweep the homeless away. That is what the council voted to do. When Ed, a man who lives in his RV, was asked what he thought of the restrictions, he blurted out,

"Hell, if they have a problem with keeping the curbs clean, I'll sweep them myself every day." But no one ever asked him.

Santa Cruz, by voting in favor of these restrictions, has moved away from what other cities have been doing. For instance, Santa Barbara has recently moved in the opposite direction, approving in concept a vehicular parking lot in the county and a series of smaller, legal parking areas throughout the city.

GENESIS OF THE CLAMPDOWN

On July 24, Don L. Hubbard, president of the Harvey West Area Business Association, contacted Public Works officials and asked them to deal with problems involving littering. The subsequent discussion involved two options: either the City install porta-potties and a dumpster in the Harvey West area, or put up signs preventing nighttime parking. City Manager Dick Wilson favored parking restrictions from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m. seven nights a week. The stated reason in the staff recommendation was "street sweeping."

When Public Works Director Matt

Farrell was contacted by HUFF activist Robert Norse, he acknowledged that no public hearings had been held. When asked whether any other street in the city has 5 a.m. to 7 a.m. restrictions, Farrell admitted there were none. When asked whether Pacific Avenue, the main street in the downtown, is swept daily, he said "no."

Marquez, speaking at the City Council meeting, testified that the prohibited hours were necessary to facilitate street sweeping since the area affected is located near the equipment storage lot and it would be more convenient to sweep at those hours. No restrictions were imposed in front of large businesses located in the area. The word "homeless" did not come up during any of the council discussion except at public comment, and that was ignored.

Four streets in the industrial zone, none of which are in front of businesses or residences, have had these restrictions imposed. To add insult to injury, the council item was on the afternoon calendar's consent agenda, indicating that none on the council thought it worthy to pull

off the agenda for discussion, but were prepared to pass it without comment.

In March of 1999, a resolution initiated by Vice Mayor Christopher Krohn and passed by the council recommended the installation of porta-potties and dumpsters in areas traditionally used by homeless campers and the vehicularly housed. No such facilities have been installed despite repeated efforts by activists. When asked why, Farrell stated that the staff had been taken up with working on the Master Transportation Study. Ironically, City Council comment at a December 2000 council meeting rejecting similar signs on Almar Avenue noted that no such signs would be put in until the Master Transportation Study was done.

— Robert Norse contributed to this article.

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