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Vol. 10, No. 669 • 925 Lincoln Ave., Napa, CA 94558 • (707) 257

# MOBILEHOM

## Historic agreement may be signed by February 2 end years of disputes

Seven and one-half months after Measure A was narrowly defeated by Napa voters, an accord appears to have been reached between mobilehome park owners and residents. The agreement far surpasses what Measure A could have hoped to accomplish.

Tentative agreement to a second draft of a broad mobilehome park accord was reached this week in a meeting between the owners and the residents. The two groups have been negotiating since July through direct prodding by the Napa City Council. The seven-point Memorandum of Understanding resolves years of disputes and animosity between the two sides.

After the defeat of Measure A in June, newly elected Councilmembers Harry V. Martin and JoAnn Busenbark pushed to have Measure A reintroduced on the November ballot. The park owners objected and Martin suggested that a subcommittee be formed to hold a public hearing on the mobilehome park issue. Martin and Busenbark were appointed by the Council to conduct the hearing. Over 300 people attended the hearing and expressed concerns far more reaching than just mobilehome rent control.

The two Councilmembers reported their

findings to the City Council and set up an apparatus which resulted in months of meetings with mobilehome park owners and residents under the watchful eye of the Council. It also involved the Napa County Rental Information and Mediation Service (NCRIMS), which facilitated the meetings. NCRIMS was requested to mediate and was paid by the City for its services.

The agreement that was tentatively reached would stabilize the parks and increase communications between owners and residents. Such communications, in most parks, have been frosty in the past.

The seven points tentatively agreed to are as follows:

- Agree to use NCRIMS mediation services to help resolve future problems in the parks. The park owners have agreed to pay a fair share of the NCRIMS budget for related mobilehome park mediation services.
- To assist residents in need, the park owners agreed to offer to implement a private rent subsidy program which would follow the provisions of the Residency Preservation Program already in effect at the Napa Valley Mobile Home Park.
- Established guidelines for rent adjust-

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# Mobilehome accord near

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ments, park maintenance and capital improvements.

A. Park owners would break out utility costs from the basic rent so that the utility costs would not be compounded when the rent is increased. The residents would pay any increases in utility costs.

B. The annual increase in base rent should be limited to the San Francisco/Oakland Consumer Price Index plus 1 percent with a base of 3 percent a cap of 7 percent.

C. At least once each year, the owners should communicate with the residents regarding plans for park maintenance, repair or capital improvements. Additional rent adjustments would be appropriate in the event that a park owner experiences extraordinary capital improvement or replacement costs. Any such rent adjustments would be preceded by communication by the owners with the residents with supporting documentation of the actual costs of the capital improvement. Normal on-going repairs and maintenance costs should not be considered to be a capital improvement. For any new capital improvement involving an increase in rent, the majority of residents of the park most approve the work. The cost of the improvement should be noted in a separate statement and it should be noted when its improvement has been paid for in full.

D. There will be no increase in rent upon sale of a mobilehome.

- Owners provide options for residents

who must leave the park or are having difficulties selling their mobilehome due to hardship circumstances. Under these hardship circumstances, the two sides agreed that it would be desirable to offer the alternative of subletting the mobilehome for a reasonable period of time. The subletting would be carefully controlled.

- The effectiveness of the agreement will be reviewed by NCRIMS six months from its effective date. NCRIMS is to send a report to the Napa City Council on its findings. After that period, NCRIMS would review the process every year.
- Representatives of the owners and residents will be appointed and will meet together within six months from the effective date of the agreement to discuss any matters of mutual concern regarding the agreement. After that period they will meet annually or whenever a need arises.
- A joint resolution enacting this agreement is to be signed and sent to the Napa City Council.

The agreement is an historic one because both sides never could conduct meetings together without a breakdown. The pressure of the Napa City Council in the background played an enormous role in creating this agreement.

Final agreement is expected on February 2. The agreement, if approved, will be sent to the Napa City Council on February 7.