

Mobilehomeowners continue to face the same dilemmas

2001/10/24 - Few know mobile home parks like Fred Dufresne. Over the years, the retired Navy chief petty officer has studied the laws, monitored conditions at the city's 33 parks and helped hundreds of residents with their problems. He's become a volunteer advocate for mobile home residents facing everything from unfair rent hikes to ongoing health and safety code violations at their parks. To better regulate the parks, the city may soon consider adopting tougher mobile home laws. Under proposed ordinance changes, the city would hire a code enforcement officer and begin an extensive review of each park over the next five years. And the city, which has the second-largest mobile home population in the county just behind Oceanside, would require a park to pass a health and safety code inspection before being granted a rent increase. Virginia Terry Jensen, co-owner of four parks in the city, said the changes are more political than necessary. "We already have rent control," Jensen said. Padilla said his interest is more than political. He said he has always had an interest in mobile home issues. His grandparents lived in a mobile home park. He understands that many of the 7,000 people who live in mobile home parks here are seniors on fixed incomes or those needing affordable housing. The rent for a space ranges from a low of \$200 to a high of \$550. The average is \$350. Many parks have been around for 30 or 40 years. Ownership rarely changes, as most parks are family-owned. (San Diego Union-Tribune, Oct. 24, 2001.) 2005/07/10 - Tim Sheahan, a volunteer representative from San Diego County to the Golden State Manufactured-Home Owners League, a statewide advocacy group for park resident-owners. Sheahan has seen rents double in the last four to five years in areas that don't have rent control.

Oceanside, Vista, San Marcos, Escondido, Santee and Chula Vista each have forms of rent control governing manufactured-home communities, he said. The existence of rent control has created friction between park owners and residents, leading some cities to step in and help find new ownership for the parks. Chula Vista has 32 parks with a total of 3,645 units, with some in old-fashioned "trailer

parcs" that were built in the 1940s and 1950s, according to Leiani Hines, a city planner. These parks have higher density than newer mobile-home parks, and many of the units are travel trailers on wheels. (San Diego Union-Tribune, July 10, 2005.) 2006/07/14 - Cathy Camacho's family is one of 55 owner-occupied households, mostly low-income families and senior citizens, that will be displaced if Jade Bay closes, as planned, in April 2007. Camacho and Juarez, 24, a construction worker, paid \$10,000 last October for their trailer. They thought they got a good deal -- similar trailers were priced at \$30,000 -- but if the park closes the trailer is worthless. Many people believe Chula Vista's other mobile home parks could follow the lead of Jade Bay, which is located at 701 D St. That's because property owners stand to benefit by converting the rent- controlled trailer parks to more profitable uses that will be allowed by a new zoning plan. Jade Bay is one of several trailer parks that sit on prime land on Chula Vista's west side. The city anticipates that the parks eventually will be replaced with higher-density development, such as condominiums. The Kubota family, which owns the land and the Jade Bay Mobile Lodge corporation, said in the Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing that mobile home parks are "no longer economically feasible" to operate in California. There are 32 trailer parks in Chula Vista, and 13 are within the city's "Urban Core," an older section that is slated for condominiums, shops and restaurants as part of the city's redevelopment plan. (San Diego Union-Tribune, July 14, 2006.) 29 2006/08/26 - In an effort to protect trailer residents, city officials are recommending a zoning freeze for five mobile home park sites. The trailer parks are on a list of urban parcels that the city was planning to rezone for high-density development, such as apartments and condominiums. City officials now say the mobile home park zoning should remain as is until a plan is in place to help poor residents who would be displaced by redevelopment of the sites. Chula Vista has 13 urban trailer parks. Five of them -- Jade Bay, Bayscene, Bison, Cabrillo and Terry's -- are slated for rezoning. The other eight urban parks have special permission to operate on land that already is zoned for high-density residential and commercial development. Any change in zoning would not force mobile home parks to close. However, rezoning makes the park land more valuable. That could provide an incentive for property owners to close the parks. (San Diego Union-Tribune, Aug. 26, 2006.) 2006/12/21 - Chula Vista, with 32

trailer and mobile home parks, has adopted an interim ordinance until a more permanent solution can be found. Temporarily, anyone wanting to convert a bankrupt or existing park must present a relocation plan to the city before being considered for a land-use change. The owner of Jade Bay, a 55-unit mobile home park in Chula Vista, forced this issue when it declared bankruptcy in April. Barbara Nunnelee has lived in Jade Bay for a quarter-century. Her mobile home is 42 years old. Something comparable would run \$49,000 new. Forced to move, her mobile home has zero usefulness, value or insurance payout. Bankruptcy court might provide her \$1,200. Old Chula Vista has 7,000 people living in its 31 collections of homes on wheels or concrete blocks. New Chula Vista, east of Interstate 805, tellingly only has one. (San Diego Union-Tribune, Dec. 21, 2006.) 2007/01/04 - Jade Bay Mobile Lodge residents, who are being evicted from the bankrupt park, have been offered payment for the full value of the mobile homes they will have to leave behind. That's far more than the Kubota family, which owns the park, originally intended to pay. Under the new deal, most tenants were offered the "insurance replacement value" of their homes: typically, between \$7,000 and \$8,000, up to a maximum of \$10,000. The original settlement offer for most tenants ranged from \$1,050 to \$1,200. About 40 tenants have accepted the offer and three tenants have not. Community activist Peter Watry noted last year that after the bankruptcy the Kubotas stand to gain a "windfall" profit when the land -- which has a bayfront view -- ultimately is redeveloped into condominiums or commercial buildings. (San Diego Union-Tribune, Jan. 4, 2007.) 2008/01/04 - **Chula Vista has sued the owners of Brentwood Mobile Home Park to force payment of \$277,208 in fines and fees for what the city calls "substandard" facilities that put residents' health and safety at risk. City Attorney Ann Moore filed a lawsuit Dec. 21 in Superior Court that alleges Brentwood's owners refused to correct numerous violations of the state Fire Code and Mobilehome Parks Act.** Beginning in 2004, city inspectors visited the park at 1100 Industrial Blvd. and pointed out problems that needed to be corrected, including a lack of fire hydrants and inadequate firetruck access. Inspectors said the electrical system was a fire hazard, the sewer connection needed to be upgraded and household garbage wasn't stored or collected properly. The park is owned by Brentwood MHP Investors LLC, which bought it in April from the Loretz Trust. The

land on which it operates is owned by another investor, the Hall Trust. (San Diego Union-Tribune, Jan. 4, 2008.) Notes 30 1 Belasco, Warren James. Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1997. 2 Corky McMillin interview June 25, 2005, DVD in McMillin Vertical File, Bonita Museum

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2016 Update – there are over 1M MH residents throughout California