



Redding increases property protections

By Scott Mobley
Thursday, June 19, 2008

Redding will extend a new state law protecting single-family homeowners from eminent domain abuse to all property owners.

Wrapping up their meeting just before midnight Tuesday, the City Council voted 3-2 to forbid elected officials from taking property from one owner and transferring it to another.

"We have never used eminent domain in this city to take private property, no matter how blighted," said council member Ken Murray, who proposed the local law. "But I want to make it really hard for some future councilperson to willy-nilly take property from one person and give it to another just to jack up our revenue."

Councilman Dick Dickerson and Mayor Mary Stegall voted against the ordinance, saying current state law and council policy offer enough protection. Both were concerned the city was opening itself to future legal battles over the new law's language.

The city could take property from one owner and sell it to a limited liability corporation set up exclusively to receive that property under Murray's ordinance, Dickerson said.

City Attorney Rick Duvernay agreed the proposed law contained such a loophole.

Dickerson also worried the eminent domain restriction could keep the city from dealing with a blighted building, such as the former Skin Arts Studio across Hilltop Drive from the new Kohl's shopping center.

California voters on June 3 approved Proposition 99, which prevents government from seizing owner-occupied homes and transferring them to another private property owner. That law applies only to single-family homes occupied 12 months or more.

Redding's more restrictive ordinance would trump the state law, Duvernay said.

Murray's ordinance applies only to the city. The council also voted 3-2 to conduct the studies and hearings necessary to extend the law to the Redevelopment Agency.

In other business Tuesday, the council:

Voted 4-1 to do nothing with some \$3 million in Stillwater Business Park bid savings until August, when the city will reconsider its budget.

The council had been asked to consider putting that money into future stages of the business park, a new police station, the city's parks fund, a regional gun range or a wider interchange at Interstate 5 and Oasis Road, where Redding's next big box zone is supposed to sprout. The council has listed all these options as priorities in past meetings.

Council member Patrick Jones cast the lone vote against setting the money aside, unwilling to spend the

windfall even for his “beloved (gun) range.” Jones favored using the bid savings to pay down the debt on the bonds sold to finance Stillwater.

Voted 5-0 to compress work on the intersections east and west of the Cypress Avenue Bridge into two consecutive weekends this summer.

Businesses on both sides of the Sacramento River say they have been hurt by construction to replace the span with a wider one. Plans to close the intersections at Athens and Hartnell avenues for up to five weeks at a time to realign their intersections with a wider Cypress Avenue would have killed many shops and eateries, business owners have said.

The city will pay \$250,000 out of its already-budgeted construction contingency fund to pay for the accelerated street work, which will completely close the bridge on those two yet-to-be-determined weekends.

The city will notify businesses and motorists four weeks before the closures, Assistant City Engineer Jon McClain has said.

Reporter Scott Mobley can be reached at 225-8220 or at smobley@redding.com.



© 2008 Record Searchlight