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Mobile home residents march on AmCan city hall

By Sarah Rohrs / Times-Herald staff writer

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AMERICAN CANYON -- Angry their mobile home park could be changing for the worse, about 40 residents descended Monday morning on City Hall, demanding the city address their concerns.

The action is the latest in a skirmish over conversion senior housing to all-age facilities, particularly at Olympia Mobilodge of Napa, 244 American Canyon Road.

A new ordinance passed requires use permits before these conversions can take place.

Olympia Mobilodge owners at Waterhouse Management Corp. contend the park does not need a use permit, and also deny residents' criticisms lobbed Monday that the park is not maintained.

City Manager Richard Ramirez, Planning Director Brent Cooper and other staff members met for more than an hour with Olympia Mobilodge of Napa residents.

Resident and protest organizer Terri Pohrman said the city is not enforcing the age-conversion ordinance, and is also letting down its senior citizens. Olympia Mobilodge has been restricted to residents 55 and older, but residents say more people of all ages are moving in.

"The city has to stand up to this problem," Pohrman said. "This has been going on way too long." She added seniors may become homeless as the mobile

home park is converted.

Residents also allege Waterhouse Management is endangering their health and safety by not maintaining the facility.

Planning Director Brent Cooper said the city will look into residents' concerns and will try to verify if the park is still a senior facility. He said it would remain a senior-only park if at least one member in each unit is 55 or older. The city will also send a written reminder of the use permit requirements to Waterhouse Management, he said.

The use permit process is meant to protect senior housing and would require applicants to consider ways to protect that housing, Cooper said. The applicant would also need to examine how conversion would impact roads, water and air quality and other areas, he said.

In addition, the city pledged to help residents set up a Neighborhood Watch program with the American Canyon police department.

Cooper said residents will need to take their concerns about lack of maintenance to the state Housing Community Development director, an action Pohrman said she and others have already taken.

Pohrman also said she is soliciting help from statewide senior advocates and from attorneys to assist them with addressing their health and safety, and mismanagement complaints.

Meanwhile, Waterhouse Vice president Ruben Garcia stressed the firm does not need a use permit because the age conversion already occurred in 2006 when changes in the mobile home park rules were made.

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At that time, the park notified residents the facility would no longer be limited to a senior community, Garcia said. He also said the facility is safe, well-maintained, and makes timely repairs to the pool, clubhouse, and other areas.

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