



## City Council overturns denial for dialysis center permit

By TOVIN LAPAN -- Santa Cruz Sentinel

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CAPITOLA - The Capitola City Council on Thursday unanimously voted to overturn the Planning Commission's denial of kidney dialysis center in the heart of the retail district.

Satellite Healthcare applied to lease an almost 8,000- square-foot commercial space at 3801 Clares St., a location near Pier 1 Imports that was formerly occupied by Hollywood Video.

In April, the Planning Commission denied the permit for the medical office on a 3-1 vote, citing concerns that allowing nonretail uses in the commercial area will hinder efforts to bring in more retailers to the shopping district.

"I see two issues here. They are money and health," said City Councilman Kirby Nicol. "In my mind, it's a no brainer. You can always find more money. You can't always find better health."

More than a dozen dialysis patients and their supporters spoke at the meeting to urge the Council to approve the permit.

Barry Maners, the architect for the facility who helped represent the clinic at the meeting, said dialysis patients need treatment three times a week for three hours at a time, and accessible locations are a major issue.

Proponents of the clinic have said that patients at the clinic will shop at the neighboring businesses and that the construction and operation of the facility will create jobs.

"Satellite Healthcare is applying to occupy a property that has been vacant for two years, and, given the current state of the economy, it could be argued that it would be vacant for another two years," Capitola resident and dialysis patient Lee Walters said. "This will improve the lives of residents."

The owner of the property, Phil Roth, said that he ignored Satellite Healthcare's interest in the space a year ago, hoping to find a retail tenants. Now, after waiting in vain, he asked the Council to approve the permit.

Currently, Satellite Healthcare has two similar facilities, one in Santa Cruz and one in Watsonville.

In other business, the City Council voted 4-1 to approve a plan for providing housing assistance to low-income families that were affected by the recent changes to the city's mobile home park rent stabilization ordinance.

In order to settle multiple lawsuits, the city worked out an agreement to allow vacancy decontrol in return for long-term leases for low-income residents. The plan chosen will provide more than \$150,000 in aid next year for an estimated 170 mobile home owners, and require \$35,000 to administer. The plan will not cover the entire increase in rent for low-income residents, with a cap of \$175 in assistance per household and rents going up by \$200 to \$300 in some cases. The program will be revisited year to year based on available funding.