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By CHRIS COUNTS

Supes continue work toward short-term rental ordinance

PROPONENTS OF short-term rentals once again told the Monterey County Board of Supervisors April 12 they want a moratorium on enforcement until an ordinance regulating the business — and allowing it — is created. In response, supervisors directed the county's legal staff to study the idea. But it isn't clear if such a moratorium would even be legal.

Since the county sent out letters to short-term rental operators last month warning them that the practice is illegal in the county's coastal areas, 5th District County Supervisor Dave Potter's office has been inundated by letters from proponents of short-term rentals, though out of 634 letters the supervisor recently received in less than a week, only 184 came from Monterey County.

Proponents rallied at the past two county board of supervisors meetings, where besides asking for a moratorium on enforcement, they complained the process to develop an ordinance — which began three years ago — is taking too long.

At the March 30 supervisors meeting, county planning official Melanie Beretti said the process to create the ordinance will probably take another year, but at this week's meeting, Potter asked the county's planning staff to make the completion of the ordinance a priority. He asked that a final meeting of a short term rental working group be scheduled in the next 30 days, and a final draft of the ordinance be brought before the planning commission "in the near future."

The county is working on separate ordinances that would regulate short term rentals in the coastal and inland areas of the county. It's unclear how the county will address the issue in Big Sur, which has its own land use plan — and where opposition to the practice is strongest.

Proponents argue that short term rentals fill a void in the marketplace, providing a wide range of lodging possibilities for a growing number of people who want to visit the county. They also say they create jobs and raise tax revenue.

Opponents insist the practice makes it harder for long-term residents to find housing, violates zoning codes, creates more noise and less privacy in neighborhoods, and diminishes "a sense of community."