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# Huntington Beach takes a look at senior mobile home rental assistance program - Los Angeles Times

Lilly Nguyen | Staff Writer

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Bob Herold, 89, seated in his wheelchair, demonstrates against the rent increase with fellow Skandia Mobile Home Park residents in February.

(Kevin Chang / Staff Photographer)

The Huntington Beach City Council voted Tuesday to lend a helping hand to seniors struggling with increasing rental costs in local mobile home parks.

But it isn't necessarily the help they've been asking for.

With Councilman Erik Peterson absent, the council directed city staff to phase out the city's existing Tenant Based Rental Assistance program, which is supported by the federal Housing and Urban Development department to provide rental assistance to low-income residents for a maximum of two years.

About \$600,000 annually is earmarked for the TBRA program, money Councilman Dan Kalmick and Councilwoman Natalie Moser said could instead be put toward a Senior Mobile Home Rental Assistance program.

Staff were asked to explore what the policies and procedures would look like to establish a program that would assist seniors with their rent, including any amendments required by the federal government to redirect funds from the TBRA and a plan for staff or a nonprofit partner to administer the program once it's off the ground.

Kalmick and Moser prepared a report that addresses some of the concerns brought forward by senior residents who have appeared before the dais, voicing their fears that they might soon be pushed out of Huntington Beach due to the [climbing cost of rent](#).

The report acknowledges that rent increases in mobile homes is particularly challenging as residents own the physical home but not the land beneath it.

"If rent becomes unaffordable, picking up and moving, as one might do when renting an apartment, is incredibly difficult. Either it may be cost prohibitive to move a manufactured home, or the home may be too old to find a suitable space in a nearby park with more affordable rents," Moser and Kalmick wrote.

The report further notes that rent in those parks is increasing for a number of reasons, including sales of the entire parks, which can lead to property tax reassessments, rising operation costs and inflation.

Kalmick said he wanted to discuss what the council could do to help seniors without approval of a charter amendment by the vast majority of Huntington Beach voters.

Skandia Mobile Country Club residents, who have alleged for months that the park is gouging them by hiking land rental costs by \$75 a month each year for the next three years, turned up for the council meeting Tuesday night, calling for council members to place a potential rent "carveout" measure on the ballot.

The city passed Measure EE in 2002, which prohibits rent stability ordinances, but mobile home parks would be exempted if a majority of Huntington Beach voters passed a "carveout" measure.

Huntington Beach resident Arthur Estrada said during public comment Tuesday that the members of the City Council "portrayed themselves as sympathetic to our plight," but he felt nothing had actually been done to address the issue.

Estrada [pointed to the recommendation](#) by the Huntington Beach Mobile Home Advisory Board in April to send a proposed "carveout" of Section 803 of the City Charter to the City Council for review.

That [charter amendment](#) was not discussed Tuesday night with all the other charter amendments proposed for this November's ballot.

"What is the difference between uncaring council majority and sympathetic ones if nothing is being accomplished?" Estrada asked.

“Put yourself in our shoes,” Estrada said. “You apparently just want us to sit there and take it. Is that the hard truth you’re delivering to us? Is that your idea of representation? Please do not cave into predatory park owners and allow them to further abuse us. Any temporary measure that you will do is just that — temporary. We need more.”

Kalmick said discussion Tuesday was focused on meeting rent as opposed to trying to lower it.

“It’s not the panacea. It’s not a cure-all solution, but it is a solution that this ... council can achieve without a hard-fought political battle with money that we aren’t totally necessarily spending right now,” said Kalmick. “... This buys us some time to help the folks that are going to see those rent increases, the massive inflation that’s coming through. They can apply and be able to meet that subsidy if they qualify for income.

“We understand that nobody wants to pay more rent. Nobody wants to pay more rent, but we think this quantifies ... and qualifies the need for the folks that need this assistance.”

Moser said the issue of rent increases is not just local to Huntington Beach, as some residents noted in their comments, but he agreed a local solution is necessary.

“What this is doing or what this is proposing to do is give a little bit of space, to give the people who are immediately affected by this a little bit of breathing room, so that way perhaps this larger problem can be addressed,” Moser said.

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