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City Permit Necessary to Peddle

By Cathy Tyson



From left, Patty Battersby and Traci Reilly surrounded by her boys Photo Cathy Tyson

Around the end of February, any solicitor knocking on Lafayette doors must display a permit issued by the City of Lafayette along with valid photo identification. Boy and Girl Scouts, along with neighborhood kids with school fundraising projects are exempted, as are religious canvassers.

Traci Reilly got the ball rolling on the permit ordinance two and a half years ago. "This was really a group effort by neighbors and citizens who got involved and made it happen." Looking back however, and having kids at Lafayette Elementary School when she joined the Crime Prevention Committee, "this was my number one priority." This was in the aftermath of the travelling magazine salesman who recently plead guilty to the murder and rape of Elizabeth Vuori, an elderly Lafayette resident.

To qualify for the permit, a background check will be made - if the applicant has any felonies or certain categories of misdemeanors including anything involving theft, violence, drugs or acts of a trespassing nature and the recently added "anything of a sexual nature," the permit will be denied.

Police Chief Hubbard explains, "We didn't want a lengthy list of the many specific crimes, so we used broad language," to encompass the myriad of reasons why a permit might be denied.

In addition, police will check to see if the applicant has any outstanding in-state or out-of-state warrants, or if the subject is on probation. Police will also check with the County as well as the California Department of Motor Vehicles and out of state motor vehicle departments.

Currently Lafayette is covered by chapter 56-4 of the Contra Costa County

Code. When this Ordinance becomes enacted solicitors must comply with Chapter 4-4 of the Lafayette Municipal Code entitled, "Peddlers, Solicitors and Canvassers" instead of the County rules.

Over the course of many meetings, a number of citizens have come forward to express their opinion that all soliciting should be illegal. However, according to City Attorney Mala Subramanian that is unconstitutional.

Concerned citizens were happy with the outcome. "I support what the Committee has come up with," said Michael Olsen. "It's a black and white issue in my neighborhood. Selling door to door is just a thing of the past." Patty Battersby of the Happy Valley Improvement Association noted, "I support the new stricter ordinance. We do not want strangers coming into our neighborhoods."

The draft ordinance will come back for a second reading at the next City council meeting; thirty days after that it becomes law.

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