

## **CONTRA COSTA TIMES**

## Panel asks for limit on big events

By Alan Lopez STAFF WRITER

A Kensington committee is asking the county to allow no more than two events annually with 125 people in a backyard amphitheater on Coventry Road.

The municipal advisory committee formally approved the recommendations at a meeting held Wednesday night in response to a new draft of a county events ordinance that would allow retired concert promoter Danny Scher to hold up to three events per year. The original draft would have allowed up to four concerts a year.

Drafted by the county community development department, the ordinance would allow two events with up to 200 people and one event with up to 300 people.

At its July 12 meeting, the county planning commission is scheduled to consider the ordinance for a recommendation to the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors.

The recommendations from the Kensington committee Wednesday night followed a series of meetings held about proposed laws that would allow Scher to legally hold fund-raising concerts in his 300-seat backyard amphitheater on Coventry Road, said Kensington advisory committee chair Ray Barraza.

The events ordinance the committee considered Wednesday night was drafted in response to a call for feedback to an April draft from the Kensington committee and other unincorporated advisory committees and Kensington groups, Barraza said.

Residents at Wednesday's meeting said the county's proposal came closer to being acceptable, though they still offered questions and criticism, with one resident saying it "smacked of special interests."

They asked how the county would enforce regulations within the ordinance such as a limit on decibel levels and the number of people.

Residents said they objected to Scher holding his events year after year.

"The ordinance -- I don't mean to be impolite -- but it's nonsensical," said one man. "It just doesn't make a lot of sense for this community."

Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia, who helped research the ordinance, said similar ordinances exist in cities throughout the state, and dismissed concerns that the concerts would affect property values, provided they follow conditions within the ordinance.

"I don't find it unreasonable to have three events of the right size," Gioia said.

Scher has held periodic fund-raising events at his home for the past four years, and said he doesn't make money from the events.

After a recent concert with Jackson Browne was moved from his home to a smaller venue in Berkeley, 100 fewer children were able to attend a summer circus camp in Mendocino County, he said.

"John Gioia worked hard to satisfy everyone's concerns in the county," Scher said following the meeting. "This is a county-wide issue."

Scher has appealed three fines from the county totaling \$800 for concerts he held last year, but no court date has been set, he said.

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