

Richmond mayor stifles councilman's proposal

■ Tom Butt storms out after Irma Anderson refuses to hear his idea to require landlords to get business licenses

By Rebecca Rosen Lum
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RICHMOND — Many California cities require rental property owners to take out a business license, and Richmond should do the same, said Councilman Tom Butt.

But discussion of the idea was quickly thwarted by Mayor Irma Anderson, which sent Butt storming out of a Tuesday City Council meeting early.

Butt proposed bringing Richmond in sync with cities such as Berkeley, Davis, Dublin, El Cerrito, Livermore, Millbrae, Newark, Pacifica, Rohnert Park, San Rafael, and a host of others.

The fees aren't exactly staggering: El Cerrito charges \$78 a year; Livermore roughly \$50; Pacifica \$25 per unit; Rohnert



Anderson



Butt

Park \$50 for the first unit and \$25 for each additional unit.

Mostly the money is used to pay for city inspections.

"At \$78 a year, you're only talking about \$6 a month or so, but when you put it all together that's \$1 million for the city," Butt said.

No sooner had Butt launched into his reasoning than Anderson cut him off, saying the issue was slated to be discussed in the finance committee.

"It's not a simple matter," she said.

Tensions between various council members and the mayor have grown over the past months, with some complaining

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she dumps items from the agenda that she does not wish to discuss.

"Just forget it," Butt said as Anderson rejected his explanations.

"I will," she shot back.

Vice Mayor Richard Griffin dissolved in giggles as a clearly exasperated Butt gathered up his materials and left the council chamber, slamming the door.

"He says it takes too long to work through the committee process," Anderson said later. "It's a good thing Washington and Sacramento don't see it that way. In committee, you get all facets of an issue."

As soon as Butt was gone, the proposal's opponents expounded on its flaws, which Anderson said was "inappropriate."

"I've never seen a tax on a landlord that wasn't transferred to a renter," said Councilman Nat Bates.

Councilman Jim Rogers said there is no doubt the fee "will be passed along to middle-class working people."

Late Tuesday night, Butt used his widely distributed e-mail newsletter, the E-Forum, to vent his frustrations with Anderson.

"Mayor Anderson allows some council members to wax on for 10 to 20 minutes on their favorite topic, but when I want to speak, she is quick to shut me down, argue with me, interrupt me or facilitate a 'call for the question' to force an end to debate before I have a chance to speak," Butt wrote.

"I would get more speaking time if I signed up for Open Forum."

Anderson said, "The man's response to any frustration is throwing papers down, slamming doors and putting out that E-Forum."

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