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Mtn. View council keeps Shoreline passes

OFFICIALS CITE LACK OF OUTRAGE OVER PERK

By Julie Patel
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Mountain View City Council members will keep on rocking at Shoreline Amphitheatre next year.

Citing a lack of public outrage, the council voted late Tuesday to keep the luxury box concert tickets the amphitheater gives each member -- an \$8,750 perk they say has become a fair part of their compensation.

Critics, including Councilman Greg Perry, said the tickets pose a potential conflict of interest because the council routinely votes on requests from Shoreline, which is run by promoter Bill Graham Presents on land leased from the city.

Instead of choosing to sell the tickets to raise money for the city's coffers -- or simply accepting a free pass instead of luxury seats -- the council chose to keep the arrangement members have enjoyed for two decades.

Outgoing Councilwoman Rosemary Stasek said she didn't see the big deal in using the seats and blamed the media for hyping the issue. She used her tickets to see Beastie Boys and Rage Against the Machine but said it never stopped her from doing her duty.

"I have been over the past eight years the most outspoken, consistent critic of the amphitheater and at the same time the most consistent user of the tickets," she said.

Stasek said being able to go to all the concerts kept her better informed of what was happening at the amphitheater. Council members also get VIP parking and free hors d'oeuvres, Stasek said, but "there ain't no free booze."

Earlier this year, Perry raised the issue and Councilman Nick Galiotto proposed that the city sell the tickets. But when it came time to vote Tuesday night, only Perry and Mayor Matt Pear supported a plan to sell the city's seats, including 300 general admission tickets given to city workers, volunteers and community groups.

Pear, however, didn't support giving council members free luxury boxes for six shows and free admission to the remaining concerts -- an idea the council split on 3-3, with Galiotto, Perry and Matt Neely voting yes. In the end, it was status quo.

"I don't think we need to legislate morals," said Councilman Mike Kasperzak, who said each council member has a choice to refuse the tickets.

He said he doesn't get calls or e-mails about the issue and that most residents he talks to see the tickets as part of the council members' salary. Mountain View council members earn \$6,000 a year in the part-time position.

Not one of the half-dozen residents at Tuesday night's meeting spoke out against the perk, which the council took up past 10 p.m.

Mountain View resident Diane White didn't attend the council meeting, but she said she does attend plenty of Shoreline concerts -- and pays her own way.

``To me, it's unfair and wrong and they should do something about it," said White, 45, echoing a half-dozen other residents interviewed Wednesday.

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