

Nude Bathing Ban OK'd

By GLENN BARR

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A Los Angeles City Council committee today approved a controversial proposal which would outlaw nudity on city-run beaches, parks and playgrounds, except in special areas set aside for that purpose.

The Police Fire and Civil Defense Committee approved the amended ordinance after hearing often angry testimony from Venice residents who jammed a small committee meeting room.

The matter comes before the council Friday, but committee members said they have little hope the measure could become law before the Fourth of July weekend.

To be enacted quickly, the ordinance would require unanimous approval on first reading and swift concurrence by Mayor Tom Bradley.

The ordinance, the result of a motion by Councilman Arthur K. Snyder, would make it illegal to "appear, bathe, sunbathe, walk, or be nude" in any public parks, playgrounds or beaches which the city runs.

There would be several exceptions, however. Children under the age of 10 would be exempt from arrest, as would be anyone participating in live theater performances.

The law, as Snyder proposed it, would give the city's Recreation and Parks Commission the power to designate areas at certain beaches where swimmers could sunbathe

nude legally.

Following the often stormy hearing, the committee — chaired by Snyder — endorsed the ordinance but stipulated that the commission must set up at least one such area on at least one city beach within 30 days of the ordinance's adoption.

The law, if adopted, would be effective immediately at parks and playgrounds.

In outlining the proposal, Snyder said he was not trying to legislate morality, but only to improve the governing of city recreational areas.

One speaker disagreed, however, charging the ordinance "smacks of hysteria."

Herbert Graser, a Venice architect, said he had measured the distance from Ocean Front Walk to the spot where nude bathing is practiced on Venice beach. Details of human genitalia cannot be seen at that distance, he said, therefore the ordinance is unnecessary.

Under current law, sunbathing in the nude is not illegal, said deputy city attorney Dion Morrow.

Morrow cited a 1972 state Supreme Court case which requires that nudity must involve lewdness or obvious sexual gestures to be illegal.

"There is no existing city ordinance that prohibits or regulates nudity in publicly owned recreational areas," Morrow told the committee.

Tom Colman, a private attorney, charged that the

ordinance is "a rush job" which has "been shoved through too quickly and has some specific problems." He urged a delay to allow public hearings.

Jay Ray Gallagher, a frequent candidate for public office, called the ordinance "a gimmick by a weak councilman facing re-election." Gallagher charged it would further burden police, who would have to enforce it.

Snyder said he preferred the ordinance to the alternatives, which include doing nothing about the nudity, prohibiting it, or designating an entire beach as a nude bathing area.

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