

City approves video arcade in mall

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Video games are coming to Helena — but they'll stay only if the operators of Bally's Aladdin's Castle and the Capital Hill Mall can keep their neighbors happy.

After hearing the concerns of six Butte Avenue residents that where teens go, trouble follows, the commission on Monday voted to allow a 65-game arcade to open where McDougall, O'Malley and Me once served food and beverages.

But the board attached a condition to its unanimous "yes": if neighbors' nightmares come true, the commission can reconsider the vote in six months.

Speaking for six Butte Avenue residents, Sue Carlson spoke against the arcade because of the influx of youth she's afraid will result.

Teens passing through her neighborhood to and from the mall may cut through her yard, she fears; and some may resort to thievery for money to feed the machines.

Although she admitted that all teens aren't bad, "It doesn't take but a group or two to really terrorize the neighborhood."

But an impressive, organized proposal from Aladdin's Castle found favor with the board. Commissioner Blake Wordal said he'd approve the arcade because "It's less intrusive than the business that was just there, which was a tavern with poker machines."

Other commissioners echoed his support.

Mayor Russ Ritter agreed, but voiced concern about neighbors' fears — and suggested the six-month trial date.

"I think we ought to give them (Aladdin's Castle) the opportunity to run this place the way they say they can," Ritter said.

In other action, the board:

■ Proclaimed Oct. 22-29 "Red Ribbon Week" in Helena, in support of the statewide campaign against drug and alcohol abuse.

■ Set a public hearing Nov. 13 on a proposal to create a street lighting district on Highland Avenue between Lamborn and California. The cost to residents reportedly would be \$5.84 per month.

■ Noted that the irrigation work at Bill Roberts Golf Course is being paid for by golfers, not taxpayers.