

## **Bicycle advocate ticketed for parade without a permit on King Street**

by Genevieve Bookwalter

SANTA CRUZ — At the same time Micah Posner is pleading with city leaders to convert a neighborhood street into a bike-safe boulevard, the outspoken bicycling advocate is locked in a legal fight with them over a fine he was levied for leading a supposedly unsafe bicycle protest parade down the middle of that same street without a permit.

Posner, who along with many other cyclists wants King Street turned into a bicycle boulevard to provide an alternative to cycling down Mission Street, said the parade riders "were not doing anything that shouldn't be done every day."

At issue is a miniparade held in November, when Posner and more than 100 other cyclists flooded King Street to show their support for the proposed bicycle boulevard, which could include bike lanes or rerouting thousands of cars off the street. The thoroughfare runs parallel to Mission Street, where two cyclists were killed and one seriously injured within 18 months of 2007 and 2008. The group, decked out with streamers, banners and a trailer holding the Santa Cruz High School Ukulele Club, pedaled to Santa Cruz High School.

But police say Posner's protest parade was counter-intuitive, as it led small children down the middle of a street still open to cars. So they documented problems and handed the report to the city attorney, who filed "People vs. Micah Posner" and asked Posner to pay a \$110 fine plus \$264 in court costs. The case is in Traffic Court.

"He's inviting families to come out, with their kids, to ride in the street," said Santa Cruz police Capt. Steve Clark, who said a permit could have ensured the road was closed and officers were stationed for the event. "To invite the unsuspecting community out to an event where you haven't bothered to take the proper safety precautions is wildly irresponsible."

The event is not the only unsanctioned parade in town. For example, the First Night DIY Parade, held downtown on New Year's Eve, is a somewhat spontaneous event for whomever shows up to march down Pacific Avenue. Police have long complained that the group does not secure permits, but Clark said because that group does not have an obvious organizer, it is difficult to cite. In this case, Posner was advertising the event for weeks.

City leaders said they offered Posner complimentary permits, but he refused. Posner said he did not like the conditions the permits set, including requiring that participants ride on the sidewalk or the right-hand side of the street. Instead, he wanted the parade to take over the entire street.

Posner said he understood Clark's concerns, but said the parade went off without a hitch so he doesn't know why it's an issue now.

"That might have been an interesting argument to have before we had the event, but now the event's over and it all went safely," said Posner, who is requesting mediation.

Meanwhile, Posner said he is refusing to pay the fine and is organizing another King Street ride on Sunday to honor Bike to Work week, complete with a bicycle-powered smoothie maker and other refreshments. He said he doesn't have a permit for Sunday's event.