

Neighbors urged to work out yule beef

Council leery of ruling on holiday light show

By Will Bigham

Staff Writer

CLAREMONT — The City Council declined to take action Tuesday night to limit the scope and operating hours of Whittier Avenue's "Christmas House," an elaborate Christmas light show that attracted thousands of nightly visitors in December and angered some nearby residents.

The council encouraged the operator of the light show, Richard Viselli, 55, to meet with concerned neighbors to come up with compromises that can be put into place before next year's Christmas season.

They also encouraged city staff to act as mediators.

"Nobody here wants to see this regulated," said Councilman Sam Pedroza, echoing remarks made by several council members who did not feel the Council Chamber was the appropriate venue to address the neighborhood dispute.

Viselli is a Christmas enthusiast whose passion for the season drove him to create what he

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No ban yet

Medical marijuana issue to go before Claremont City Council again in July.

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dubbed the "Christmas House."

He decorated his home with more than 58,000 Christmas lights and synchronized the lights to a musical score that he broadcast from a low-watt FM radio transmitter.

Viselli operated the display from 6 to 10 every night during December. At its peak the light show attracted thousands of nightly visitors.

A group of 11 neighborhood households petitioned the city

to limit the scope of Viselli's light display, citing traffic, littering and noise issues caused by the exhibition.

The neighborhood push against Viselli was spearheaded by Barbara Swartz, 44, who lives across the street from Viselli.

Swartz's anger over the display boiled over on Christmas Eve when she got into a physical confrontation with Viselli at the entrance to his home. She did not attend Tuesday night's council meeting.

Viselli said after the meeting that he was willing to work out

a compromise with the Swartzes and other concerned neighbors, citing limits to operating days and hours that he is willing to consider.

Robert Swartz, Barbara Swartz's husband, was less enthusiastic about working with Viselli, saying he "got nowhere" when working previously with City Manager Jeff Parker.

"We will not be able to work out the issues between us," Robert Swartz said.

Staff writer Will Bigham can be reached by e-mail at will.bigham@dailybulletin.com, or by phone at (909) 483-8553.