

Green Code Enforcement Delayed Again

City Says Industry Needs More Time

By DAN MCKAY
Journal Staff Writer

The city is postponing enforcement of its new green building code yet again, this time for three months.

In a memo to building officials, Planning Director Richard Dineen said the industry needs more time to adjust to the standards and City Hall needs time to train its inspectors and conduct "public educational outreach programs."

Mayor Martin Chávez and city councilors approved the

code in September as a way to address global warming and to make buildings more energy efficient. It was scheduled to go into effect in April, but the city postponed it until this month.

The latest delay was announced Tuesday. The code is now expected to go into effect Oct. 1.

Councilor Isaac Benton, who sponsored the regulations, said there's no reason to further delay enforcement of the green building code. The building community is used to dealing with updated code requirements every July, he said.

"I don't think it's a good move," Benton said in an interview. "There's been plen-

ty of time."

It's been almost a year since the legislation was first passed, he said, and the city already agreed to delay some of the most controversial aspects of the code, such as a furnace-replacement provision.

The code calls for homeowners, when they replace a furnace or air conditioner, to upgrade to a more energy-efficient model. Critics have said the high-efficiency models are too pricey to justify the requirement.

Benton and other supporters of the code agreed to delay enforcement of that provision until July next year. They also added an exemption, allowing homeowners to bypass

the requirement if installing the new kind of furnace would require extensive remodeling to the home.

Regardless, the code was to go into effect for new construction Tuesday.

Industry representatives maintain the requirements are confusing and impractical.

"The phones were ringing off the hook," said John Richardson of Gorman Industries Inc. "Nobody knew what to do. Perhaps the Mayor's Office got enough phone calls."

The issue could be headed to court, as opponents have repeatedly questioned whether the code is pre-empted by federal regulations.