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## Petaluma City Council backs Occupy's push to delay foreclosures

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The Petaluma City Council voted Monday to ask mortgage lenders and regulators to halt foreclosures during the holidays, a symbolic gesture that granted a real victory to protesters who proposed the idea.

The council also voted to ask Sonoma County Sheriff Steve Freitas to refrain from assisting evictions from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, getting applause from the members of Occupy Petaluma who rallied support for the foreclosure moratorium.

"They gave us what we wanted and then some," said Amy Hanks, a health care provider who spoke on behalf of the Occupy protesters. "We are very pleased."

Council members acknowledged they have scant ability to regulate foreclosures, especially for loans that have been repackaged and sold to investors who couldn't find Petaluma on the map. But they said it was important to send a message.

"I hope we can prompt some second thinking on the parts of some of these financial institutions," Vice Mayor Mike Healy said.

Foreclosures in Petaluma have become a growing worry for Catholic Charities, the county's federally certified housing counselor, which recently upped the number of foreclosure workshops from one a month in Santa Rosa to two a month in both Santa Rosa and Petaluma.

Hanks told the council 1,000 Petaluma homes are currently in foreclosure or are facing foreclosure, a fraction of the millions of homes nationwide in the same situation.

"Surely this cannot be considered a normal situation," Hanks said. "We just can't sit idly by while so many lives are disrupted and destroyed by impersonal financial mechanisms, especially when it isn't even good for our economy."

The moratorium vote underscored a difference between Occupy Petaluma and many other versions of the Occupy Wall Street movement, which have tense relations with cities, like Santa Rosa, Oakland and San Francisco. So far, Occupy Petaluma has kept its overnight camping to a small presence at Penry Park, in agreement with its permit, while protesters and council members continue to be in each other's good graces.

"I thank the members of Occupy Petaluma for bringing this to council,"

Councilwoman Tiffany Renee said before Monday's vote, adding that as a result of their efforts Rep. Lynn Woolsey, D-Petaluma, was urging others in Congress to write regulators encouraging the moratorium.

"This certainly has all the flavors of becoming a national movement, and it's because

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of you," Renee said.

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