

Mother voices toy gun concerns

■ Residents worried about imitation pistol sold to boy from ice cream truck

By Aaron Morrison

STAFF WRITER

HAYWARD — Tuesday night's City Council meeting turned out to be a sweet occasion for Starletta Carter, her 6-year-old son, Parris Rosemon, and a few of their neighbors: Carter was given the floor to address the issue of local ice cream trucks selling realistic toy guns to children.

After a slew of local union workers pleaded with the council for fair compensation contracts, Carter, along with several other Hayward residents who turned out to show their support, spoke to the City Council.

"We have about five trucks that come down our streets daily," Carter said, addressing all six City Council members, city staff and Mayor Mike Sweeney. "We don't think this is appropriate."

Sometime in late June, Carter gave her son \$2 to get ice cream from a passing ice cream truck. But unbeknownst to her, Parris returned with a small, black-and-brown toy pistol that shoots fake bullets from its barrel. Two weeks later, Carter found the toy under her son's bed.

After making her point and even demonstrating to the council how the toy gun works,

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Sweeney asked that Carter aid his office's investigation by writing down truck numbers and other identifiable information. But Carter says she is unsure how much of that she can do.

"I work two jobs to support myself and my son," Carter said after Tuesday night's council meeting. "I can't possibly catch all the trucks, as many of them that come."

Hayward resident Ollie Arnold and Union City resident Norma Nelson assured Carter that she need not worry about catching all of the trucks. Arnold and Nelson were two of the four people who came to make public comments concerning Carter's issue.

"I'm appalled that this type of thing is taking place in this community," Nelson said during public comments. "(Ice cream trucks) should not be selling any type of paraphernalia that is strictly to encourage violence in the community."

Arnold said she initially did not take Carter's story seriously until the co-worker who mentioned it to her brought her a newspaper article.

"I could not believe what I was looking at," Arnold told the City Council. "Through the day I was thinking, 'What if this kindergartner held this gun up at a police officer and was shot? How would a parent feel if their child was shot for nothing?'"

Federal regulations require that imitation firearms bear markings that identify



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HAYWARD RESIDENT Starletta Carter (right), her 6-year-old son Parris Rosemon (left), and a few of their neighbors stand before the Hayward City Council and Mayor Mike Sweeney at Tuesday night's council meeting. Carter and her neighbors are concerned about the realistic toy guns that they say are sold from ice cream trucks in their neighborhood.

them as fake. Carter found her son's toy gun without the proper markings and believes her son was able to remove them too easily.

For now, Carter has the help of Arnold and Nelson, along with several of her neighbors, to get the word out and to help

write down truck numbers.

Arnold suggested recruiting help from churches in the neighborhood, an idea that Carter said she will use.

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