

Homeless-shelter funding wins boost

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SANTA CRUZ — As the competition stiffens among programs wanting public money for housing projects, City Council members Tuesday indicated their intentions to fund a permanent shelter for the homeless on Potrero Street and a non-profit housing corporation for "affordable housing" projects in Beach Flats and Neary Lagoon.

Council members were poised to finance the \$110,000 down payment for a shelter endorsed by civic and church leaders who are members of a non-profit group called Citizens Committee for the Homeless.

But council members stopped short of making a final decision on funding for the shelter, proposed for a warehouse in a commercial district across the street from the St. Francis Catholic Soup Kitchen and

Shelter in the River and Potrero streets area.

Council members also were ready to approve spending \$120,000 to fund a first-year administrative budget for the Santa Cruz Community Housing Corporation — a group rooted in the progressive, tenants-rights' political movement. Instead, the council decided to delay a decision to give other groups a chance at the money. Council members indicated no

financial commitments to other programs seeking new funding from the city's \$430,000 share in federal Housing and Community Development grants.

Council members did not act on funding requests by these shelter programs: • the Christian New Life Center for \$130,000 to enlarge its existing shelter on Fair Avenue;

• County Shelter Project Coordi-

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nator Paul Brindel for a new \$180,000 shelter;

• and \$90,000 for a new shelter for battered women and their children to be run by Women's Crisis Support.

Council members did agree to commit \$57,000 in federal housing funds to the La Familia Crisis Center in Beach Flats. They dropped the Housing Law Project from the federal housing funding list, but did agree to fund the program with revenue-sharing money.

Council members also agreed to continue funding for the Laurel Park and Beach Flats playground summer programs.

Final decisions on housing and community grants are to be made in April, following a public hearing.

Although Councilwoman Katy Sears-Williams said she had "strong reservations" about funding a "mass shelter" for the homeless, council members unanimously agreed to "express intentions" to "buy a shelter," but did not specify the amount.

They indicated the money would come from federal housing money, if possible.

They voted to direct members of the Citizens Committee for the Homeless to work with the Planning Department to make a report on funding possibilities by March 25. They also made it clear the shelter would have to be approved through normal land-use procedures.

Council members were under pressure by a request from Page Smith, a university professor, historian and member of the William James Association, the non-profit group that organized an existing temporary shelter on Cedar Street.

Smith appeared before council members at Tuesday's meeting to ask for support for the Potrero Street shelter.

Since the Cedar Street shelter is scheduled to shut down March 20, Smith said it is imperative for immediate action to be taken to secure another shelter facility.

Smith has called for "heroic" efforts to raise funds in the community for the shelter. He has proposed about 60 beds at the facility.

County supervisors have already given conceptual support for the shelter. Operating expenses would be \$4,600 per month, according to Smith.

Councilwoman Mardi Wormhoudt had recommended the council go ahead with a decision to fund the Community Housing Corporation's \$121,000 request.

But council members withheld a decision, after Councilman Joe Ghio said he was concerned that procedures were being breached.

Ghio said it was improper to fund the corporation without first seeking alternate proposals from other groups.

At Ghio's suggestions, council members voted to ask for request for proposals from other housing-development groups.

Community Housing Corporation has proposed to buy "key properties" in Beach Flats for a housing rehabilitation program and to develop about 150 units on city-owned vacant land at Neary Lagoon.

The organization also proposed to convert the former Union Ice Plant near Neary Lagoon into a cooperative business.

Board members include realtor and community activist Arnoldo Gil-Orsorio; downtown businessman and Chamber of Commerce board member Neal Coonerty; La Familia Center Director Lucy Trujillo; city planning commissioner and Democratic Central Committee Chairwoman Dee Hansch.