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Council to weigh hangar rent hikes at municipal airport

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An across-the-board increase in hangar rents at Watsonville's municipal airport will be considered by the City Council tomorrow night.

A \$10-a-month hike was recommended by Don French, acting airport manager. Hangar space currently costs between \$115 and \$160 per month. The additional

money would be used to help pay for needed improvements, including more hangar space, and ongoing maintenance.

Rental of end room — or "T" hangars — would increase from \$30 to \$35 per month.

The increases would bolster airport revenue by about \$20,000 a year.

Two weeks ago, the City Council

approved \$55,000 for design work for 53 new T-hangars. French said building the hangars would cost between \$800,000 and \$1.1 million.

There are 155 people currently paying \$15 a year just to remain on a hangar waiting list with waits of up to 12 years. The first 60 people on that list have said they would be willing to pay a lot more than the current rental rates for a place to keep their aircraft.

A comparison of hangar rates in surrounding areas shows that even with the increases, Watsonville would remain competitive with other airports.

In Hollister, hangars cost \$163 per month; in Salinas, rates vary from \$85 to \$180. Hangars are most expensive at Reid Hillview airport, where rents range from \$157 to \$255, and in Hayward,

where rents go from \$160 to \$223.

Dan Corder, president of the Watsonville Pilots Association, said he had not seen the proposed rates, but that the WPA had had several discussions with the city about the increases. He said he foresaw no major opposition to the increases. "We're a little bit on the low side ... just off center" of other airports, he said.

Three other hangar-rate adjust-

ments will be considered tomorrow night, including the cost of sharing hangars.

Because of the lack of available hangars, some people are sharing hangar space. The cost of additional aircraft in a shared hangar will go from 50 percent to the full rent. Fourteen aircraft are currently sharing space at rates varying from \$57.50 to \$90 per month.