

✓CF Employees RP 1/30/91 p. 13

City asked to seek 'compensation' from Green Giant

By CHELA ZABIN
STAFF WRITER

Is the city of Watsonville entitled to compensation for the loss of several hundred jobs in the Green Giant layoffs? Some Green Giant workers think so, and they suggested at a City Council meeting last night that the city look into the matter.

Although it might seem a little unusual, several of the workers said, the Levi Strauss Co., when it closed down operations in San Antonio, Texas, recognized the impact on the city, and compensated it for the loss.

Yolanda Navarro, one of the Green Giant workers who has been laid off, told the council that the whole city — the shops, schools, churches and social services agencies — would be affected. She suggested the city do a study of the expected impact and present it to Green Giant.

Navarro was one of four laid-off workers who spoke to the council last night. Besides suggesting that the city should seek some compensation, they asked the council to make good on a resolution it approved last year in support of the workers.

The workers talked about the financial difficulties they and their former co-workers were expecting.

"Please help us because everything is so expensive right now," Maria Winfield said.

Although several of the workers suggested that the city had promised to help them with paying utility bills and rent, the resolution actually said that the city would urge landlords not to evict Green

Giant workers who could no longer pay their rents and utility services and not to cut off utilities because of unpaid bills.

"The reality has hit home," said Councilman Oscar Rios.

He asked if the city could talk to Pacific Gas and Electric Co. on behalf of the workers and see if there was any way to work out a payment plan for utility bills.

Pointing out that the utility company already has some programs, Mayor Todd McFarren suggested that the city find out about them and pass the information on to the laid-off workers.

"I'm fairly sure PG&E would be amenable to some sort of program," he said.

McFarren asked the staff to see if it was possible to get some emergency rent vouchers from the Housing Authority.

At that, one woman went up to the microphone and said she'd called the Housing Authority, told them her troubles and got no satisfaction.

"They did not mind me," she said.

"Well maybe if our city manager talks to them they'll mind better," McFarren said.

The council voted 5-0 (members Betty Murphy and Johnny Kacsmayrk were absent) to meet with PG&E and the Housing Authority, talk with landlords, work out payment plans for city utility bills and follow up on the job-training program Green Giant set up for the workers.

It will also look into San Antonio's arrangement with Levi Strauss.