

City extends olive branch to county

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The Watsonville City Council has decided maybe it's time to sit down with the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors and discuss their mutual concerns, rather than wait until the next time they meet in court.

The council unanimously supported a request by Councilman Rex Clark to invite the Board of Supervisors to Watsonville for a meeting. There are many issues they can discuss, Clark said, beginning with such subjects as annexations, flood control and the designation of agricultural land, all of which have been irritants in the relationship between the two local governments.

Councilman Vido Deretich said it's about time for such a meeting.

"I've been here eight years, and I've never met (Supervisor) Gary Patton," Deretich said.

Several council members agreed that the council should try to open the lines of communication with the supervisors, but Councilman Dennis Osmer warned that the council must go into it with a good attitude.

"I hope we don't approach this with an adversarial attitude," Osmer said.

"Us?" asked Deretich sarcastically.

Mayor Betty Murphy said, "I don't feel that there is this adversarial attitude constantly by the city toward the county." But, she added, "a fact is a fact: We have been sued by the county and it doesn't make you feel very good."

The county has sued the city over redevelopment and the Landmark Business Park plans, among other issues.

Murphy said that when she was elected mayor three months ago, Patton sent her a congratulatory letter, and asked her to hold out an olive branch.

Murphy said she responded by asking Patton if he would "send out a dove of peace, and why didn't he send it winging our way with our dump permit?"

The city has run into a stumbling block in getting a permit to expand its garbage dump.

Yet Murphy supported Clark's idea, and said she would invite the supervisors to an evening meeting in Watsonville, to be held before Thanksgiving.

Clark suggested that a fairly limited agenda be set for the meeting.

"If we all get at each other's throats at the meeting," Clark said, "I guess we won't have any more."

In other items at the council meeting:

- City Manager John Radin reported that Airport Manager Vern Ackerman plans to retire at the end of the year, after 41 years of running the city airport.

- The mayor honored Celia Organista, president of the local chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens, for being named "Woman of the Year" by the national LULAC organization.

- On behalf of Mort Console, former owner of Watsonville Canning and Frozen Food Co., former Councilman Frank Osmer asked the council to reconsider the zoning on Console's 35 acres next to Ramsay Park. Osmer argued that Console was treated unfairly because a smaller percentage of his property was zoned commercial than were several neighboring parcels.

- Police Captain Terry Medina reported that the department now has a motorcycle to use in traffic control. An officer will soon be chosen for the motorcycle assignment, then will be sent to a special Highway Patrol training program before beginning motorcycle patrol.