

# Council looks at across-the-board cuts

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A 10 percent across-the-board cut in Watsonville's proposed \$12.2 million 1988-89 General Fund budget will be considered next week by the City Council.

City Manager John Radin said he is asking all department heads to tentatively cut the 10 percent and then draw up a scenario of how it would affect the city. Promising it would be "a real eye-opener in terms of cause and effect," Radin said he would present the information to the council Thursday.

Mayor Betty Murphy said she also would present a list of proposed budget cuts to the council next week. The budgets she is looking at cutting are the travel and subsistence-training, personnel-training and the capital-improvement — new equipment and supply — budgets, she said.

The council is talking budget cuts because the proposed 1988-

89 budget, which totals \$36.7 million, was balanced only by depleting the city's reserves and denying \$1.2 million in department requests. Additionally, Radin has warned that \$500,000 to \$1 million must be found by next year to avoid cutting services in the 1989-90 fiscal year.

The council took a small step last night to bolster the city's reserves by cutting \$15,000 budgeted for Watsonville's share next year of a feasibility study on consolidating the communications systems of the county's cities.

Council members voted unanimously to transfer the money to the reserve fund, after Radin said he felt the study was unnecessary because he already knows such a system would work. Total estimated cost of the study is \$100,000, he said.

The council also voted unanimously to direct staff to return with a proposal for raising

rates at the city pound, after Councilman Dennis Osmer pointed out that revenues have been decreasing while the pet population has risen.

Council members expressed reluctance to raise rates for fear they would discourage pet owners from retrieving their animals, but Watsonville Police Chief Ray Belgard said some owners wouldn't pick their animals up if the pound was free. Those people either don't want their animal or find it just as easy to get a new one, he said.

Osmer said, "I think that, as low as it (the fee) is, people that can't afford to pick them up can't afford a dog."

Radin pointed out that 200 animals monthly are put to sleep, while police Capt. Chuck Carter said the \$10,000 annual euthanasia cost is one of the pound's biggest expenses.

Another possible cost-cutting measure the council slated for future discussion is to either eliminate or revamp the city's Design Review Commission.

The matter was broached by Councilman Rex Clark during a review of the Planning Department's proposed \$334,551 budget, after Planning Director Bud Carney commented on the time spent and the "mounds and mounds of paperwork" generated in responding to the 21 people on the two commissions and the council.

When Clark asked whether money could be saved by combining the Design Review Commission with the Planning Commission, Carney answered in the affirmative, pointing out that some of the two commis-

sions' work amounts to a duplication of effort.

The Design Review Commission "works very efficiently and effectively," he said, "but there is a cost you pay to have that. And that is the mounds of paperwork and duplication of effort."

Murphy strongly disagreed with Carney's comments on duplication, however. The function of the two commissions is very different, she said, and the Design Review Commission is the only city entity to study the structures of proposed developments themselves.

"I think you're mixing apples and oranges when you say that land use and zoning and use permits are the same as looking at a development," Murphy said.

Councilman Tony Campos, who described himself as the only council member who has also served on both commis-

sions, said the Design Review Commission causes a certain amount of waste by not being "up front" on what types of design would be approved.

That failure is his "principal complaint" about the commission, Clark said. It has not done what it was created to do, he

said, namely, to establish a list of criteria and design standards.

Councilman Vido Deretich agreed that not enough clues are given developers on design.

"Mayor, one thing we should admit is we have never told anybody what we want," he said.

Murphy suggested the council review the commission's guidelines later in the year, possibly August.

Other budgets reviewed last night included the police, finance, purchasing, central office services, city attorney and building inspection budgets.

Council members closely questioned money spent on the city's law library, staff training, police equipment, computers and consultants.

The council meets next at 7 p.m. Tuesday at City Hall to hear funding requests from social services agencies.

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