

# City approves more work for desal consultant

Critics ask city officials  
to stop public relations spending  
on desalination proposal

✓ Desalination plant  
By J.M. BROWN

jbrown@santacruzsentinel.com

2-28-11

SANTA CRUZ — Over objections from opponents of a proposed desalination facility, the City Council voted Tuesday to approve a half-million dollar contract extension for a firm conducting public outreach for the controversial project.

A group of local conservationists wants the city to quit paying the San Francisco contractor, Kennedy/Jenks, to provide a website and other public relations tools until more up-to-date predictions about the water supply are available this summer. The two agencies have proposed building the plant to offset future shortages, but critics say a 20 percent drop in demand predictions shows a plant is unnecessary.

Jim Bentley, a retired water department

## DESAL

Continued from B1

employee, told the council employing the firm “allows you to wage a single-sided campaign for desalination using ratepayer money when there are ratepayers who feel reasonable alternatives to desalination is a fair use of the money. It’s time to level the playing field.”

The council approved the third contract amendment for Kennedy/Jenks totaling \$580,000 to be shared between the city and its desalination partner, the Soquel Creek Water District. The firm’s scope of work will increase this year to include assessments about energy use, the water

intake process and some design elements. At year’s end, the two agencies will have paid the firm \$1.4 million since 2008.

Vice Mayor Don Lane requested staff study concerns raised by residents about the need for the plant amid decreased water demand. However, Lane said he thought it was inconsistent of critics to seek information about the need for desalination but ask the city to stop paying a firm to help disseminate details.

Also Tuesday, the council agreed to delay controversial proposals to more closely regulate surfing schools and bicycling.

As a safety matter, the city has recommended restricting surfing instructors to eight students in the water at any time and a 4-to-1 teacher-to-student ratio.

School operators, who are required to request an annual permit to teach in the break off Cowell Beach, are upset that two instructors would be required to teach a full class. They also lament the fact that the city’s contracted vendor for surfing instruction, Club Ed, would be exempt.

Recreation officials said they plan to set a limit for the preferred vendor, whose contract has been put out for bid, and iron out concerns from surfing school operators before bringing the ordinance back to the council.

The council also put off a proposed regulation that cyclists affix their license number on the tube of their front seat. Cyclists are required by city regulations to get a \$3 license good for up to three years.