

Watsonville to change mayors

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WATSONVILLE — After narrowly losing his bid for mayor last year, Tony Campos will likely be selected by the City Council Tuesday to be Watsonville's next leader.

If chosen, the 50-year-old real estate agent will be the first conservative to lead the city since liberals gained power five years ago, when the city was divided into seven districts under a court order.

Lowell Hurst announced Friday he would not seek a second, one-year term as mayor, though he will continue as councilman. In a written statement, Hurst said: "I came to this decision after much soul searching. While I have enjoyed meeting the challenge of being mayor for this wonderful community, it just takes too much away from my family and job to do it for more than one year."



Hurst

But on several occasions during his recent re-election campaign, Hurst expressed interest in seeking a second term as mayor, and mentioned his desire to continue in that post as recently as Tuesday.

What Hurst didn't say was that he may not have the votes.

Campos, however, has two votes from Al Alcalá and Betty Bobeda, who also supported his mayoral bid last year. The fourth and deciding vote is expected to come from new council member Dennis Osmer, according to sources familiar with City Hall. When reached Friday, Osmer would not confirm or deny whether he plans to vote for Campos.

Hurst said Friday he did not know who Osmer planned to support for mayor, and that Campos' bid for the spot had nothing to do with his decision.

"I just got to thinking about it more ... it was really the demands on my job and my family," Hurst said. "I think you almost have to be retired and wealthy to do this job. I felt I did everything I could as mayor, and I'm not going away."

Hurst is a 46-year-old agricultural teacher at Watsonville High School who is married and has two children, ages 11 and 9. He will serve his second term until 1998.

Osmer succeeds Councilman Parr Eves, who did not seek a second term, and will be sworn in Tuesday. Osmer last served on the council between 1987 and 1989. Continuing on the council are members Todd McFarren and Betty Bobeda, who also will be sworn in Tuesday.

While governmental agencies like the Watsonville City Council commonly discuss who they plan to choose for mayor before a meeting, they may not know that getting consensus on an issue privately violates the state open meeting laws.

According to Brown Act section 54952.2, "a dialogue among legislative members directly or by phone, fax e-mail or staff go-betweens is prohibited if used by a majority to build consensus about what should (or should not) be done on a matter actually or potentially before the body," as paraphrased recently by the California First Amendment Coalition.