



Aguilar takes the gavel in Scotts Valley

New mayor wants to increase affordable housing

By JONDI GUMZ
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Stephany Aguilar

YEARS ON COUNCIL: 9.

WORK: Drafted parks plan for city; helped raise funds for skatepark.

GOALS: Wants to raise the affordable-housing rate in Scotts Valley from 15 percent to 20 percent for the city's working class.

SCOTTS VALLEY — As mayor, Stephany Aguilar plans to push for more affordable housing, or as she puts it, "workforce housing."

Aguilar, 54, elected unanimously to her third stint as mayor Wednesday, has served on the City Council since 1996. She was vice mayor for the past year.

"She's done a super job," said Councilman Cliff Barrett, who nominated her for mayor.

Dene Bustichi was chosen as vice mayor, also unanimously.

Many of Aguilar's past efforts have been successful in the city, notably recreation.

Playgrounds, soccer fields and places to walk — all elements in the parks plan she helped write — have come to fruition. She also helped raise \$750,000 to build a municipal skatepark, which opened last year.

Aguilar's predecessor, Paul Marigonda, pushed to break the logjam stalling creation of a town center on Mount Hermon Road.

Officials are counting on the development to bring in more sales-tax revenue; Aguilar sees an opportunity to build housing that's affordable for working people.

The city requires 15 percent of any housing development to be offered at affordable prices, instead of market rates. Aguilar wants to increase that to 20 percent, the same as in Watsonville.

She proposed the change once before, but she was in the minority. That won't keep her from trying again.

Her idea is to use the city's redevelopment money to increase the percentage of affordable units in new developments. A program in Monterey County could serve as a model, she said.

Habitat for Humanity, a nonprofit, is "extremely interested" in a city-owned lot across from the fire station on Erba Lane, she said, and the carpenters' union is willing to help.

She persuaded fellow council members to put the property on the market, a move that could lead to more affordable housing.

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ing and replenish the city's empty reserve accounts.

The property must be rezoned for multiple-family housing, and a public hearing before the Planning Commission is needed. That could take place at the end of February.

Aguilar, who is married, stepped up her involvement in local government after retiring from West Valley College.

Of the five council members, she is the most active in the League of California Cities, and will serve as vice president for the coming year for the Monterey Bay region.