

# Consolidation of city's senior centers going smoothly

By MICHAEL MERRILL

STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — The merging of Watsonville's two senior centers is now in the process of becoming a reality after the Watsonville City Council unanimously approved an agreement, hammered out by three groups charged with maintaining the centers, earlier this month.

The Watsonville International Senior Center (WISC) and the Watsonville Senior Center, operated by the Association of Watsonville Area Seniors (AWAS), and Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) will combine resources and move into a single location next month.

Councilman Dennis Osmer, the prime mover behind the negotiations, said, "As we went along, I realized that facing the cuts, there just wasn't any way the seniors were going to continue receiving their meals without (combining the centers.)"

Another hurdle was funding. The Senior Center required two grants from the Senior's Council, \$30,000 and \$5,000 respectively. The \$30,000 grant was approved June 19, the second grant has still not been voted upon, but according to Seniors Council President Moe Khan. That money will be awarded as soon as the Council can obtain the funds, possibly in two or three months.

Although the actual physical consolidation into one facility will not take place until July 15, the programs are in the process of being integrated now. Khan said this phase was going very smoothly, with all the parties cooperating extremely well. "I am really happy about that," Khan said. "Both sides (AWAS and WISC) are working together. I think this is the most cost effective and logical way to go."

Khan credited two people as being instrumental in the successful merger, Dennis Osmer and Santa Cruz County Fourth District Supervisor, Ray Belgard. Khan said it was Belgard who originally brought the parties together, and it was Osmer who held them together long enough to facilitate the agreement.

According to the terms of the agreement:

- The AWAS Board of Directors shall oversee the management of the Watsonville Senior Center and shall determine all programs provided within the facility.

- AWAS, FNS and the City of

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— Councilman  
Dennis Osmer

Watsonville will develop respective annual budgets that assure meals and programs at the center will be consistent with Seniors Council funding.

- All meals for seniors shall be provided by FNS. The registration for meals shall be developed so that seniors experience a minimum delay in being seated and served, similar to the current level of service provided at both centers. The registration and sign-in process for meals will not be changed for a period of three months. Thereafter a single registration and sign-in system shall be developed by WISC and AWAS managers.

- FNS will oversee the transportation of seniors to the meals program. A service area will be established by FNS after a list of all current AWAS passengers is received. Seniors needing a ride to the meal program will be transported between 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.; return trips will be provided upon completion of the meal. Participants will not be charged for transportation, but will be given an opportunity to make a donation. Extended hours of service may be provided pending the availability of vehicles and volunteer drivers.

- Except as otherwise required by law, at any time that AWAS or FNS determine that they have deadlocked in a decision over the provision of senior services or any area referred to in the agreement, the

parties agree to submit their dispute in writing to the city manager of Watsonville, who will select an arbitration procedure appropriate to the nature and subject matter of the dispute.

- The agreement takes effect July 1 and remains in force to June 30, 1998. It may be renewed upon mutual consent of the parties.

- AWAS will be responsible for site maintenance and repair as outlined in the lease agreement between AWAS and the city.

- Any equipment, furniture or other property transferred from WISC or any other FNS site will be clearly identified and will remain the property of the owner.

- The city manager will appoint a member of the city staff to act a liaison to AWAS.

- Authorized representatives of AWAS and FNS will meet with city officials every three months to consider the progress of the consolidation until such time as it is deemed by the group to be unnecessary.



Jean Lopes (left) and Ann Odak assemble senior lunches at the Watsonville Senior Center Wednesday.

Tarmo Hannula