

Future of annual Harbor Festival is in doubt

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SANTA CRUZ — The fog is settling on the annual Harbor Festival and Boat Show.

The 6-year-old event could sail into obscurity if Port District commissioners decide they can't afford to sponsor the festival this year.

The June water spectacle at the Small Craft Harbor has attracted thousands of boaters and beachgoers with events like Jester dinghy races, the bathtub paddle, "Rube Goldberg 500," rowing and sail-

board contests.

But budget constraints — squeezed tighter by last year's \$100,000 expense for an anchovy cleanup at the harbor — have made the staff think twice about automatically moving forward with plans for the festival.

The festival is a "significant," but optional expense, said Harbormaster Steve Scheiblaue in a report to commissioners.

"Since it is largely a community public relations effort and a stimulant to harbor

concessions, the loss will be noticed, but hard to define in real values or numbers," he said.

Scheiblaue said he did not know how much — if any — revenues are generated from increased harbor concession sales at festival time.

But he does know there is support for the festival from concessionaires and from boat slip renters, as well as from the Santa Cruz Boat Show Committee.

Commissioners will consider the fate of

the festival at a meeting tonight at 7:30 at the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary building, 365 Lake Ave.

In past years, the festival has been running about \$10,000 in expenses, including 160 hours of staff time.

Last year, commissioners made a budget decision to spend no cash on the festival.

The district could save staff time and \$4,900 by not holding the festival this year, said Scheiblaue.