

Rios chosen Watsonville mayor

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WATSONVILLE — Breaking with an informal rotation that gave Oscar Rios the mayor's job last year, the City Council on Tuesday elected him to a fourth term.

Vice Mayor Betty Bobeda, who believed the rotation placed her in line for the job, lost her bid for mayor and her current post to Councilman Chuck Carter.

Carter nominated Rios for mayor, while Judy Doering-Nielsen nominated Bobeda. Councilman Ramon Gomez nominated himself.

Doering-Nielsen, Gomez and Bobeda then voted for Bobeda, who

failed to garner the required four votes.

Rios was then supported by Rios, Carter, Gomez, Rafael Lopez and Ana Ventura-Phares.

In a prepared statement before the votes, Bobeda said Rios supported the rotation when it suited his purposes, and quoted what she said were his previous statements in support of the system.

She asked the City Council for the same "respect" afforded Rios.

Rios said Monday he has supported the rotation system, but that it was up to each City Council to decide.

Doering-Nielsen nominated Bobeda for another term as vice mayor,

but the motion died for lack of a second. Carter was elected vice mayor with five votes.

Before voting on the mayorship, the City Council debated the rotation system.

Doering-Nielsen said she would prefer the public elect an at-large mayor, but said passing the mayor's post to the vice mayor is the second best system.

Ventura-Phares disagreed, saying the rotation strips the City Council of its discretion.

"That doesn't seem fair to me at all," she said. "I strongly believe that every year we decide."

Lopez said as elected officials, council members were bound by the

city charter and the democratic process that brought them all into office. The charter does not provide for a rotation, he said, so council members must earn their posts.

Former council member Al Alcala spoke in favor of Bobeda and the rotation.

During last year's nomination process, Alcala said Bobeda had the votes to be mayor but honored the rotation system. He called Lopez's statements about democracy nonsense.

"A decision is made before you come in here," he said. "You know it, and I know it."

Because of term limits, this is Rios' last year in office.