

CF

SJMN SEPT 27, 1995

Chief planner suspended in pot seizure

BY JOHN WOOLFOLK
Mercury News Staff Writer

employees (Santa Cruz City

"I think everyone in City Hall is in a state of shock."

— City Manager Richard Wilson

Santa Cruz Planning Director Peter Katzlberger has been placed on unpaid leave this week after sheriff's deputies confiscated 22 marijuana plants growing behind his Felton home.

"I think everyone in City Hall is in a state of shock," said City Manager Richard Wilson, who must decide whether the veteran city official will keep his \$85,357-a-year job.

No arrests have been made and no case has been filed. But Katzlberger and his wife could face felony marijuana-cultivation charges, said Assistant District Attorney Paul Marigonda.

The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department said that officers with the Campaign

Against Marijuana Planting spotted the plants during a routine helicopter fly-over earlier this month.

Two deputies and four CAMP officers returned Thursday and confiscated the budding, mature plants, which were growing in plastic pots, said Sgt. Richard Ross. A "well-used trail" led under a wooden fence from the

muddy area where plants were found to Katzlberger's Quail Hollow Circle home, he said.

Katzlberger, 52, was not home during the noon raid, but his wife, Jeanette, 59, was, Ross said. When deputies asked her about the plants, she told them "we use it as a relaxant," according to police reports. She then told deputies her husband is the city's planning director and that she "wanted to take total responsibility so the media would not find out," Ross said.

Telephone calls to the Katzlbergers' home were not returned Tuesday. Phil Passafiume, Peter Katzlberger's attorney, said: "All this has caused him a great deal of distress. My client has a great deal of loyalty for this city."

See **PLANNER**, Page 2B

■ PLANNER

from Page 1B

He worked for the city of Santa Cruz for 18 years with an outstanding record and we're going to see him through this," Jeanette Katzlberger's attorney, Brian Madden, wasn't available for comment.

Sheriff's deputies did not arrest the couple because, with their ties to the community, they were considered unlikely to flee prosecution, Ross said. The sheriff's department did not announce the case to the press, Ross said, because of the small number of plants involved.

The sheriff's department has forwarded the case to the district attorney's office with recommendations that Katzlberger and his wife be charged with cultivating marijuana. Marigonda said he has not yet reviewed the case.

Wilson said he was told about the bust Thursday, after Katzlberger called Assistant City Manager Gay Strand about it. Wilson said he met with Katzlberger but has not made a decision

SJMN SEPT 27, 1995

about the planning director's job. He mailed Katzlberger notice of his leave on Friday, effective Monday, but did not announce the decision, saying it was a personnel matter.

"I really don't have all the information I need to deal with this issue," Wilson said. "Peter is entitled to work this out with me. He has been here a great many years. He's been an important contributor to the planning department and all of us care about him very much. But this is a very serious matter."

Katzlberger, a former planning director for the city of San Mateo, was hired as Santa Cruz Planning Director in 1978 by former City Manager Dave Koester.

Santa Cruz's drug-free workplace policy, required under a 1988 federal law, covers all city employees. It prohibits the manufacture, possession, use or sale of drugs on city premises or while conducting city business, and says employees are required to report to work in appropriate mental and physical condition.