

Council OKs \$78M general fund plan

By J.M. BROWN

jbrown@santacruzsentinel.com

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SANTA CRUZ — The Santa Cruz City Council on Tuesday approved the city's spending plan for the next year, a \$193-million budget that invests greater resources in homeless services, youth programs and public safety.

The \$78 million general fund, which pays for the city's main operations, includes \$50,000 in cleanups for illegal campsites, \$20,000 in a new youth development fund and \$20,000 for a downtown trolley. There is also \$71,000 for a security gate at the Homeless Services Center, \$80,000 set aside for a county mental health outreach program downtown and \$35,000 in spending for a program that provides homeless people from other communities a bus ticket home.

Carolyn Coleman, executive director of the Santa Cruz Community Counseling Center, thanked the city for investing in new youth programs. As a member of a citizens task force exploring public safety issues, Coleman said she hopes the new initiatives will tie into forthcoming suggestions on improving safety to "foster a sense of community pride."

Mayor Hilary Bryant, who spearheaded the youth grants, said giving \$7,500 to the Youth City Council will support high school students who are making an effort to identify public safety problems, including surveying 850 young people to collect their ideas.

Personnel services make up about two-thirds of the general fund. The city is negotiating with labor groups to hold down costs as health care and pension costs are expected to outpace revenue. The city will close a \$2.1 million deficit by drawing on healthy reserves, which the council voted to reduce from a three-month savings account to two.

Councilman Micah Posner raised questions about \$500,000 for the city-owned DeLaveaga Golf Course, which is supposed to be a self-sustaining enterprise but has required city bailouts for several years.

"I don't think we want to subsidize the golf course continuously," Posner said.

Parks and Recreation Director Dannettee Shoemaker said the council agreed two years ago to give the golf course operator five years to turn the financial situation around.

Also Tuesday, the council approved moving forward

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with a state-funded project to explore establishing an emergency intertie system with Scotts Valley Water District and other neighboring agencies that would allow the transfer of water for up to 30 days. Water officials said the intertie could be tapped

if Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley and the Pasatiempo golf course ever finalize a plan to swap treated wastewater for potable water presently used to irrigate the course.

The current cost to Santa Cruz for the intertie study is \$161,000. The issue is separate from a county led investigation of ongoing water transfers that opponents of a seawater desalination project have cited as

a viable water supply alternative.

The council also heard from members of People Power and the Bike Church asking the city to consider returning collected bike parts to the latter organization for fixing up and donating. City Manager Martín Bernal said the city will issue a request for proposals to restart the bike program.