

# Dual role for Civic *Civic Auditor* box office

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SANTA CRUZ — The next time you pay a city parking fine, you might consider buying a ticket to a rock music concert at the same time.

March 1, City Council members plan to open an office for collecting parking-ticket fines at the Civic Auditorium box office.

Council members Tuesday approved a \$70,000 budget for the new "Santa Cruz Parking Citation Office."

Councilwoman Mardi Wormhoudt commented the location is "particularly unsuitable," partly because it is removed from City Hall offices where other bills are paid.

Besides, said Wormhoudt, "You might go to pay a ticket and end up buying a pass for the Grateful Dead."

But Finance Director Robert Shepherd said no better location has been found. He said he didn't relish the idea of people lining up to pay fines inside the small city Finance Department office and spilling into hallways, the way they have been doing for years at county Municipal Court offices.

The city is under orders from county officials to start collecting

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## Box office

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fines for tickets issued in the city.

There are about 120,000 parking tickets issued each year, reported Shepherd. Over the years, the Municipal Court system has been weighed down with the workload of processing stacks of tickets.

Fines for moving-vehicle violations would still be collected at county offices.

At Wormhoudt's suggestion, council members directed city staff to report back with a plan for a better location within two months.

Hoping not to duplicate paperwork problems encountered by county staff, the city has set up a computerized system to process the citations, said Shepherd. He said staff members considered contracting the work to a private company, but found a city-run operation would be cheaper and more effective.

Office hours are to be 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., including the lunch hour, with

payment drop boxes to be installed at various locations.

The council approve three new full-time and one half-time employees to man the office.

Staff members will not handle disputes other than court scheduling dates. The courts will handle the disputes, he said.

Citation data will be entered each day into a computer system and fed weekly to the state Department of Motor Vehicles. If a ticket is not paid for 21 days, the computer will add penalties automatically, issue the first follow-up letter, and if necessary, place a hold on the vehicle's registration. After 35 days, a second letter will be mailed, according to Shepherd.

Procedures still are being developed for collecting fines not paid within 35 days, Shepherd said.

Shepherd believes an efficiently run office will result in more tickets processed and more revenues for the city treasury.