

Capitola council split on where to cut budget

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CAPITOLA — Capitola leaders are split on where to make \$500,000 in budget cuts next fiscal year.

"Public safety is a top priority," said Councilman Mick Routh, who proposed keeping two police positions recommended for elimination next year.

To help keep the posts, he suggested cutting support to all community groups except for senior meals for a savings of about \$80,000.

On the other side, Mayor Margaret Fabrizio said she remained "iffy" on restoring the police officers.

"I believe there is adequate coverage," she said, pointing out that the po-

lice force is the largest department in the city.

Council members hashed out their feelings Thursday, two weeks before final decisions are scheduled to be made on the city's \$6 million general fund budget.

Under a recommendation by City Manager Susan Westman, five positions would be eliminated citywide — two police officers, a dispatcher, a maintenance position and an administrative assistant. There would also be a 1.5 percent salary cut across the board for city employees.

Three officers recently submitted resignations, two to work for the Sheriff's Office and the third because she is mov-

ing out of the area, according to Chief Don Braunton, whose force this year included 15 officers and five sergeants.

Fabrizio said funding the community groups was "not charity, but contracting services."

Councilwoman Stephanie Harlan, who has been a strong supporter of the groups, said she thinks their funds have to be reduced this year.

"Frankly, there's not many areas to cut," she said.

While other council members expressed hope that the deep cuts would be a one-time occurrence in 1995-96, Fabrizio said she expected the following year to be the same.

"I don't think it's going to improve in

a year," she said. "I don't think it's going to improve in six months. I think this is it."

City Treasurer Glenn Hanna agreed, saying the city stands to lose revenue from the earthquake tax, which is to expire in March 1997. The city will then see a shortfall of about \$120,000 in the 1996-97 budget, he said.

The city must slash its budget after an accounting of city finances this year showed it had been overspending the last several years.

It is feeling the effects of a troubled 1986 bond deal in which the city refinanced \$5 million and borrowed another \$5 million to complete city and Redevelopment Agency projects.