

# Political Tractor Pull Resolved

## Farmers set to organize their own non-profit market

**THE POPULAR DOWNTOWN** Farmers' Market, which has been at the vortex of much public discussion in recent weeks, will continue to be held on Wednesdays in its same location, the Santa Cruz City Council decided July 23.

Rather than move the market to Sundays, as was requested by the Downtown Association (DTA), longtime sponsor of the event, the council voted 6-1 to allow the market to continue to operate on Wednesdays in the city parking lot bordered by Lincoln and Cedar streets. Only Councilwoman Mary Beth Campbell dissented.

Sponsorship of the weekly affair, however, will now fall to the farmers, who are in the process of forming a non-profit organization for that purpose.

"I'm personally very happy about it," said grower Sandra Ward, committee member for the newly-formed Santa Cruz Community Farmers' Market. "If we can continue this market and that's what our customers want, then we're happy."

The DTA had asked the council to change market day to alleviate the concerns of some merchants who reported an increase in vandalism and theft on Wednesdays. But farmers, including many who feared losing clientele and others who already attend area open air

markets on Sundays, prevailed in securing Wednesdays.

Following several months of searching for a more amenable location or day, DTA Executive Director Linda Steinau told the council her organization would support the event on Sundays or not at all. Reports of drug dealing, thefts and loitering, among other nuisances, had spurred the DTA to propose a move to Sundays, when fewer stores would be open, parking would be less competitive and the population being blamed for the problems would be less likely to be around.

### Behavioral problems

"We're concerned not about the people who come downtown but with the behavior of people who come downtown," merchant and DTA board member John Lisher told the council. "This is not an anti-Farmers' Market thing. . . . We think the problems could be mitigated a lot easier if it happened on Sundays and not on Wednesdays."

Although the final decision favored the farmers, council members acknowledged that problems associated with the market should continue to receive more



The Wednesday Farmers Market will continue under the sponsorship of the newly-formed Santa Cruz Community Farmers Market.

attention. In recent weeks, greater monitoring of the event, including police presence, has helped stem many of those concerns, city officials and some business owners acknowledged.

"I seriously hope it goes well," said David Plumlee, who owns a flower shop across from the market. "But I'll also be the one who stands there making sure that it does."

According to Ward, customers can expect to see greater management and promotion of the event, as well as a more cohesive group working to ensure that business runs smoothly.

The new organization will officially assume control of the event Aug. 7. The group has forecasted a budget of more than \$42,000, which includes \$12,000 for security costs.

— Helen Meservey