

City Manager Directed Coordinated Program Of Public Works In The City

(Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of two articles on the development of Santa Cruz city government during the administration of City Manager Neal D. Smith.)

By Peter J. Heller

Few functions of city government are as much in the public eye as the construction and maintenance work that goes under the general heading of "Public Works." This includes, above all, city streets.

Due to excessive use of improvement proceedings during the '20s, and the condition resulting from assessment indebtedness during the depression, no public improvement through assessment district proceedings have been made during the past 20 years. In consequence, the street program of the city had been neglected for a long time, and with approximately 132 miles of dedicated streets, of which only some 40 had permanent paving, the maintenance problem is extremely great. Some 75 miles of these unimproved streets were never. For the past two years, the oiled and recoiled from year to year to keep them in fair condition.

In February of 1951, the city council approved a policy that wherever the property owners install curb and gutter for an entire block, the city will grade and pave that block at no direct cost to the property owners. In 10 months, 2820 feet of street were so paved, a start toward improvements which would not have been accomplished otherwise. Number of important streets were reconstructed with gas tax funds.

How small changes can result in big savings may be seen from the manner in which weed control is now carried out in city streets. The former method was to scrape the weeds off oiled streets, together with considerable dirt, load, and haul them away. Each year, therefore, the gutters got a little deepened. For the past two years, the scraping method was discarded in favor of a chemical spray consisting of a mixture of weed killer and soil sterilizer. By now, there is comparatively little weed growth in the gutters, and the amount of spraying required each year will continue to decrease from year to year.

In order to widen and reconstruct the Ocean-and-Water street intersection and to widen the traffic lanes on Morrissey boulevard, the city worked out co-operative projects with the state highway department. Sharing the cost obtained the desired results not otherwise obtainable. A co-operative project is now in process to rebuild and widen the WaterMarket street bridge.

Other public works features include construction of several trunk sewers, installation of new street lights, and high-intensity lighting of the Plaza and main thoroughfares. Maintenance of the electrolier system was taken over by the city electrical department at a considerable saving in cost. The civic auditorium received a new coat of paint. Modern lighting was installed at city hall and at the main library and four branch libraries. The San Lorenzo river and Branciforte creek channels were cleared of brush and accumulations of sand and debris.

Changes also were made on the municipal wharf. Extensive repairs were carried out on the wharf structure, and a new commercial building was erected to replace an old one. Rest rooms were built at the wharf entrance. Additions were built to the wharf, and a public landing has been established for the use of visiting boatmen.

Another instance of a minor change making a big difference: Citizens used to be disturbed by refuse collectors clanging garbage cans at 7 a.m. A simple change in hours retarded the start of refuse collection in residential areas, pleasing many who formerly were awakened by early-morning noise. Removal of

a small service charge for private dumping at the city dump appreciably reduced roadside dumping while making little difference to revenue.

One of Smith's most successful innovations was the establishment of a motor pool, headed by a superintendent of shops. Formerly, all equipment was bought for individual departments out of the departmental budget, and was for that department's use only. Thus, some departments had good equipment, and others had old and poor equipment. When the pool was established, much old equipment was disposed of and replaced with new. Equipment no longer particularly suitable to city needs was traded in on more efficient equipment.

A standard stock of repair parts was established. New storage buildings were constructed, and the corporation yard was paved. All equipment is handled on a preventive maintenance basis, increasing its life, reducing maintenance costs, and keeping it in operation a greater proportion of the time. Minor repairs are made at night so the equipment is not laid up at all.

The recreation department has been placed on a year-around basis under the direction of a trained director. After-school and evening programs for both young folks and adults are provided during the school term. During the summer months, an extensive playground and craft program is carried on. The park department, formerly under the street superintendent, has been consolidated with the recreation department.

Extensive development was carried out in DeLaveaga park, including construction of rest rooms, picnic areas, a lighted softball field, and installation of playground equipment. A greenhouse for the propagation of plants for city parks is now being completed. Grass has been planted on the baseball field of the Seahawks stadium under a lease arrangement which permits the use of the ball park by the recreation department for a baseball school.

As city manager, Smith also aided the city water superintendent

in the latter's task of running the semi-autonomous municipal utility. He gave final approval to such measures as institution of bi-monthly billing in 1949 and postcard billing in 1951, and strongly supported the 1950 bond issue which provided funds for the cross-town feeder line and replacement of the coast transmission lines.

As city manager, Smith also was personnel director of the city government. When he took over in 1948, there were no uniform work hours in the city hall, with hours varying from 38 to 44 per week. A uniform work schedule was established for all employees other than the protective services, who work their specialized schedules. In 1949, a new job classification plan was instituted with a five-step pay range for each classification. All salary rates were increased 10 per cent on July 1, 1948, and by \$15 across the board on April 1, 1951. Another request by the employees for \$30 per month across the board increase is now under consideration of the council, awaiting results of a complete survey being made by the state personnel board.

On October 1, 1948, Santa Cruz became a member of the state retirement system, with credit for 100 per cent of prior service.

Employees who are required to work outside during bad weather, such as water and street department workers, are now furnished with complete rain outfits, including coats, boots, and hats, where formerly they had to provide their own.

An accident prevention committee consisting of Police Captain Ben Krupp, Loren Scofield, Ray Bethel, and Bill Davidson, with William Parness as secretary, was formed to review every acci-

dent involving city equipment, property, or personnel. Employees involved in an accident of any kind must appear before this committee. The number of such appearances is constantly decreasing, and the accident record pays off in greater insurance refunds.

Until Smith took over in 1948, the city had no fixed policy on subdivision improvements. Since 1948, all subdivisions have had to install adequate utility and street improvements. An amendment to the zoning ordinance stopped the practice of building houses on undedicated streets.

Master planning was carried out by outside consultants, and a new zoning ordinance and land use plan are now ready for public hearings.

Limiting the width of driveway approaches except by special permit now controls at least one aspect of the serious parking situation, particularly in the beach area.

City ordinances passed since incorporation in 1866 were codified by Louis Burke, Los Angeles, and the printing contract was let this week.

This is necessarily a sketchy excerpt from a record that has spread over three and one half years. It lists some of the tangibles, but leaves out the very important intangibles which, in the long run, may benefit Santa Cruz most.

They include the experience which city employees have gained