

Bobeda named to council

She'll take seat after 4-2 vote

By CHELA ZABIN
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Betty Bobeda, who had been named by Watsonville Councilman Johnny Kacsmayk as a possible successor shortly before his death last month, was appointed to the District 7 seat last night.

Bobeda was appointed by the City Council on a 4-2 vote, with Councilmen Lowell Hurst and Parr Eves voting against her. After the vote, Hurst suggested the vote be taken again and that it be unanimous for a show of council unity. He got his wish.

"I'm delighted," Bobeda said after the vote. "I was worried. When the fourth vote was 'yes' I kind of collapsed. I knew it would be tight."

The vote was taken after the council decided against holding a special election, which had been proposed by Eves.

Eves said he was having trouble making a decision because of the amount of support Bobeda and another applicant for the position, Jim Brough, had received from District 7 residents in the past week. Supporters of all four candidates — but most notably Bobeda and Brough — had flooded council members and City Hall with calls, and Brough supporters had collected 242 names on a petition on his behalf.

Eves said he would have voted to hold a special election rather than to have the council make an appointment "if I had known two weeks ago we'd have this (response)." He said he didn't feel qualified to select a representative for the district.

Hurst said there were several problems with holding a special election, but he said there were



Kurt Ellison

Police Chief Terry Medina congratulates Bobeda.

certain advantages to it too.

"It's unclear to me, other than my personal preferences and my gut feelings" who the best representative would be, he said. "It seems only logical that the voters in District 7 make that choice."

Said Councilwoman Betty Murphy, "The voters of District 7 are going to be able to elect

the person they want to represent them Nov. 7."

She told the council the reason the City Charter put a strict time limit on filling a vacant seat was to avoid "putting the brakes on government." A special election couldn't be held at the earliest until August, leaving no one to represent the district until then. She said many im-

portant issues will be coming before the council in that time and the possibility of 3-3 votes worried her.

She also reminded the council that it would be approving the new election-district map without representation from District 7.

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Mayor Todd McFarren said the idea of a special election was "tempting," because "it takes us off the hook." But, he said, it was more important to fill the vacancy quickly. The council, he said, should just "bite the bullet" and make a decision.

Bobeda and the residents of District 7 are perceived to be more conservative in their views than the majority of the council members. That put some members of the council in the position of having to decide between selecting someone closer to their own beliefs, like Brough, or someone they felt might be more representative of the district.

Before the vote was taken, Councilman Oscar Rios said he was going to vote according to what he believed was the principal of district elections — having representatives who truly represent their constituents.

Murphy said "what swayed me was the feeling of the community, my reflection of the vote a couple of years ago, and the request of the person who won that election."

McFarren, explaining that he was voting for Bobeda as the best representative of the district, said "when I go to the polls I vote for the candidate who best reflects my views. This is different."

McFarren said some have argued that the district may not be as conservative as it once was. If that's true, he said, "it should be proved at the polls, not in an appointment."

Brough said he was surprised by the council's decision.

"I really thought I did a lot more work than anyone else," he said, referring to the preparation and thought that went into his responses to 12 questions asked of all for candidates by the council as well as efforts to show he had support in the district.

Brough said he was happy about something he felt had come out as a result of his application — the realization that the district is not as homogeneous either in political persuasion or ethnicity as previously assumed. Many of the names on the petition he'd circulated in the district were Hispanic, and many of the people he spoke to while collecting the signatures were monolingual Spanish speakers, he said.

He said he hadn't decided whether he would run for the seat in November.

Bobeda said her first action would be to call some meetings in her district so people could get to know her better and so she could hear their concerns. One of the first issues she intends to address right away are violations of the "seniors only" rules in the seniors housing developments. She also said she'd like to meet with constituents to talk more about the proposed flood-control assessment district, since many have expressed concern about it.

Bobeda, 55, works at RomaKool Berry Cooling, a cooling plant. She is on the city's Human Relations Commission and was nominated to represent District 7 on the redistricting committee. She will have to step down from both seats.