

# Capitola budget benefits wharf

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CAPITOLA — The city's newly approved \$6.2 million budget includes money to maintain the police force, shore up sidewalks and repair the aging wharf.

Last year, the budget climate was more intense, when four jobs were eliminated in June in order to balance the budget, including a police officer, police dispatcher, public works employee and administrative assistant. These reductions cut a total of \$500,000, balancing the \$6 million budget.

The public safety budget is \$3,083,887 for 1997-98, up 10.6 percent from this year's \$2,786,227. Most of this money pays for the city's 14 police officers, five sergeants, two captains, one chief, five administrators, community service officer and three parking enforcement officials. A \$79,300 chunk of the money covers beach safety.

Mayor Bob Garcia said Capitola has always made public safety a high priority. "The population may be 10,000 but last weekend there were probably 30,000 people here, and on the Fourth of July there could be 40,000," he said.

Part of the budget increase can be attributed to the city's taking over the recreation budget. Previously, it was funded by a joint powers agreement between the city of Capitola and the Soquel Elementary School District. But gains will offset most of the expenses. The city will collect fees for people taking recreational classes.

This coming year, \$150,000 will go toward setting up a permanent Capitola library. There has not been any library in Capitola since 1981.

The budget also includes \$300,000 for the wharf fund, which has been growing over the past 2 years. The weather-battered wharf has not been seriously repaired since 1982. The city may spend up to \$1 million to bolster the wharf over the next two years. Some construction work is expected to begin this fall.

The city has not yet decided which part of the landmark they will fix — the half that is closest to the beach, or the portion that extends into the bay.

As usual, the bulk of the budget for this tourism and retail-oriented community will be from sales tax, expected to net about \$4 million this year.

The 1997-98 budget will draw about 56 percent of its money from this tax, and 5 percent from property tax. The city so far has avoided utility or other special taxes because of its retail base, especially along 41st Avenue, with its mall and shops.

The city government expects Capitola's revenue to grow slightly again in 1997-98 because the overall area economy is improving. But Garcia pointed out that Capitola also faces stiff competition from other retail locations in Santa Cruz County, especially superstores such as Costco.

It took seven budget sessions and two public hearings to iron the budget out.