

Council fiddles with garbage, water, airport charges

In a series of resolutions the Watsonville City Council last night raised garbage-collection rates, increased the water-connection fee, changed the way it charges large users for sewer services and modified some airport-use fees.

Garbage-collection fees were increased by 8 percent for commercial and industrial customers, but discounted rates were provided for those who recycle cardboard, wood and metal. Curbside service will cost \$9.40 a month for three cans, and \$2.95 for each additional can. Weekly service not at the curbside will be \$13.70 for three cans and \$4 for each additional can.

The resolution provides pickup for cardboard for a monthly container rental of \$5 and a pickup of wood and metal for 50 percent of

the regular charge.

There are several reasons for the rate increase and recycling incentives, Interim City Manager Chuck Comstock said. Recent state legislation requires all landfill owners to set aside a certain amount to cover future costs of landfill closure and post-closure maintenance. Watsonville will have to set aside about \$146,000 annually.

The city is also now required to pay a \$1 per ton state tax on solid waste that goes to the landfill, which totals about \$35,000 a year. In addition, another piece of state legislation requires the city to divert 25 percent of its solid waste from the landfill by 1995.

A similar rate change is expected for residential customers

once the city's curbside recycling program gets off the ground.

Water-connection fees, which have not been increased since 1987, were increased from \$1,025 to \$1,225 for a 5/8-inch residential meter. They will increase again in fiscal year 1991-92 to \$1,290. Fees for other meter sizes will be increased proportionately.

Charges for water service, which already increase by about 4 percent each year, were not modified by the resolution. According to the assistant public works director, Watsonville's water-connection fees are still half or less of what other local agencies charge.

The council voted to change the way it charges large industrial us-

ers for sewer services in order to help them budget better.

In addition to paying a regular fee, the large users were subject to a retroactive fee when they used more than what had been determined to be their capacity rights. The businesses were finding it difficult to budget for the retroactive sewage fees, and the city agreed to raise the charge for the following year to match the previous year's peak discharge. In effect, the city would be waiting a year to collect the excess fees.

The council also modified some of the airport fees, which, after remaining the same for several years, were recently raised. The long-term parking fee, just raised to \$75 a month, was lowered last night to \$45 a month. The change

was made after some pilots protested that the parking fee was higher than the monthly tie-down fee for planes.

It was also decided that the airport should charge an additional fee to people who sublet space in their hangars to other airplane owners. Renters now keep whatever sublet fee they charge, but the airport has to maintain records on the extra airplane. The council decided that those subletting would have to pay an additional 50 percent of the rent in order to help the airport cover its record-keeping expense.

The council will review all the airport fees in a year.

—Chela Zabin