

# Osmer chosen as Watsonville mayor

By BOB LINNEMAN

Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — Dennis Osmer, a wise-cracking city councilman, was voted in as mayor of Watsonville on Tuesday night.

And in typical fashion, Osmer joked that among his priorities as the city's top dog, he would arrange lavish and expensive overseas junkets for himself. Asked what his first official act would be, Osmer quipped: "Take a break."

A reluctant mayor, Osmer said he wasn't sure if he could handle all the extra work involved with the position. As program director for Energy Services, a component of the Community Action Board, he already has a full plate, he said. But tradition dictated he take the seat as the city rotates the job each year among the seven council members.

This year, in fact, all seven current members of the council will have served as mayor at one time or another.

"It's the first time in the 130-year history of the city that all seven council members have been mayor," said outgoing mayor Al Alcalá.

Alcalá, in fact, said serving as the city's mayor was one of the greatest joys of his life. "The highlight was just being mayor," he said before changing chairs with Osmer and handing over the mayor's gavel. "Next to my family, being mayor was the greatest thing that has happened to me."

After being voted in, Osmer was congratulated in Punjabi by Watsonville resident Sohan Randhawa. Councilman Tony Campos offered his own translation of Randhawa's words: "That means don't screw up," he said to Osmer.

Also Tuesday, Oscar Rios was elected vice mayor.

The mayor carries more responsibility than other council members, having to serve as a city spokesman and attend various functions in addition to council



Osmer

duties. "I've got a real job already," Osmer said of his work at Energy Services. "And I still have to do it even though I'm mayor."

Osmer's family was in attendance and ushered in the new mayor along with a packed house at the Council Chamber. Osmer thanked his wife, Laurie, and children Brendan, 14, and Dorie, 12, for their support.

"It'll be OK," Laurie Osmer said. "He'll be a good mayor."

Osmer's father, Frank Osmer, echoed that sentiment. Frank Osmer also served on the City Council, but was never mayor. "I'm very proud of him," Frank Osmer said. "I'm proud he could outdo me."

In addition to his sense of humor, Osmer is also known for going against the majority of the council on various issues. He doesn't shy away from expressing his opinion, often to the chagrin of other council members.

But they all supported Osmer's election as mayor. "While I step down, I know we'll have a good mayor," said Alcalá, who received a standing ovation for his year of service as mayor. "We have a tradition of great mayors."