

DA hopeful meets with ag interests

District attorney
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2-5-89
SANTA CRUZ — District attorney hopeful Ron Ruiz may not have county Supervisor Tony Campos' vote, but he has the attention of some of Campos' most influential constituents.

The Pajaro Valley supervisor, who along with his colleagues is poised to appoint a district attorney next week, set up an informal meeting Wednesday, introducing Ruiz to a small group of growers and Watsonville City Manager Carlos Palacios.

While district attorney hopefuls have met with dozens of local organizations over the past month seeking political support, Ruiz's session with growers was notable in that it was organized by a supervisor.

Campos said Thursday he organized the event after a number of his constituents expressed concerns about Ruiz.

"They had a lot of concerns, and instead of them hitting me with questions, I thought they should just hear

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the answers straight from the man," Campos said.

"I have to represent my district," Campos added. "People have concerns ... like farming issues."

The meeting, Campos stressed, did not indicate Ruiz — considered a favorite in the race — had his vote in any way.

"I haven't decided yet, ... and I probably won't do so until the day we decide," Campos said.

Before the board appoints a district attorney Thursday, Campos said he plans on bringing other candidates as well to meet people in Watsonville. He declined to identify those candidates.

Ruiz said the tone of Wednesday's meeting surprised him. If anything, he said, it reminded him the office of district attorney is indeed political.

The growers, Ruiz said, were particularly interested in his experience as a member of the Agricultural Labor Relations Board in the mid-1970s. It was a tumultuous period when the state's Farm Labor Act was being implemented. The act permits secret ballots in union votes.

Ruiz said the participants grilled him on whether he had any deals with the United Farm Workers union and how he voted on certain decisions while on the ALRB.

"When I did this, the last thing I thought I'd be discussing was the labor laws or the ALRB," Ruiz said. "It shows me I'm going to get it from all sides."

Ruiz, a San Jose criminal defense lawyer and longtime county resident, is one of eight people vying to replace Art Danner, who left the district attorney post in late December for a judgeship.