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Soquel Chamber Vows To Prevent Future Damage

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The Soquel Chamber of Commerce this morning vowed to prevent a repetition of flood destruction in its downtown area by seeing that a stream clearance committee become a reality.

In other business, long-time businessman and activist Dave Tunno was unanimously elected new chamber president to replace Michael Ponza.

Tunno, the chairman of the chamber's disaster committee, called for the organization of the stream clearance committee.

The idea for the committee originated

at a special chamber meeting last week. Much blame for Soquel's flood damage was aimed at the county and state Fish and Game Department for allowing Soquel Creek to become inundated with debris.

It was that debris, as well as huge trees, that jammed at the Soquel Drive bridge during the Jan. 4 storm. Raging waters spilled over into the downtown, causing most of the damage. Three businesses will not be reopening because of losses.

The stream clearance committee will be heavily weighted with chamber members. However, the county and state Fish and Game will be represented, as well as Assemblyman Sam Farr's office, which

helped sponsor last week's special meeting.

"We can't rely on Farr or Forbus (Soquel Supervisor Dan Forbus)," said Tunno. "We have to rely on Soquel to protect our own investments."

Ponza, who was elected committee co-chairman along with Vince Brown, said cooperation is needed with the county and Fish and Game to keep Soquel Creek clear.

Ponza proposed that alternatives for flood control be received from the Army Corps of Engineers, including the future possibility even of a dam.

"There is a misconception of how dams help in flood control," said Ponza. "I

personally feel, though, that between the levy and Loch Lomond Reservoir is the reason Santa Cruz remained nice and dry this last time."

He vowed, "We'll get something started, something going."

Members of the committee include: Charlene Morgan, Soquel Fire Chief Steve Negro, Jack Beebe, Glenn Christenberry, Pete Pearson, Randy Norris, Steve Seliskar, Carolyn deVries, Wayne Howe, Bob Lissner and Herb Jasper.

Tunno asked chamber members not to get tied up in the "petty politics" of the past. Instead, the "total cooperation" of the people will be needed to get Soquel back on its feet again, he said.

While admitting he is "pushy," Tunno promised to fight for Soquel. "If I get too bad, you can always impeach me," he joked.

Other new officers include: Dave Pullin (Monterey Savings) first vice president, Alice Tiffin (Tiffany's Ice Cream) second vice president, Pat De Benedetto (Globe Interiors) secretary, Randy Norris (retired), corresponding secretary; and Pete Pearson (County Bank) treasurer.

New board of directors are: Lester Rate, Ed Pettyplace, Nic Kiederling, Beebe, Noreen Santaluce, Brown and Ponza.