

Teen Center to shut down in January

Council tells staff to investigate handing off operations of Civic, DeLaveaga golf course

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SANTA CRUZ — The Teen Center, a drop-in recreation hall for city youth, will close New Year's Day, a sacrifice city leaders say is necessary to deal with an overwhelming budget deficit.

"I'm really afraid of what's going to happen to the teens," said Parks and Recreation Director Dannettee Shoemaker.

The center offers tutors, computers, a game room, performance venue for teenage bands and a host of other activities for after school.

Still, the Santa Cruz City Council postponed the center's closure to January, versus next month, in hope that supporters might rally to raise money and keep the center open.

The decision to close the center came Monday, as Santa Cruz leaders began to look at how to slash \$9.2 million from the city's \$80 million general



ROTKIN

Questions fairness of outsourcing operations at Civic Auditorium and DeLaveaga golf course. 'The savings is in, basically reducing people's wages.'

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fund. The final budget is scheduled to be approved at the council's regular July 14 meeting.

Also Monday, the council agreed to further study handing the costly operations of the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium and DeLaveaga golf course over to private groups to save money, while keeping ownership of both facilities.

This isn't the first time the Teen Center has been threatened. Last fall, as city leaders dropped funding for museums, Harvey West Pool and the Beach Flats Community Center to deal with a previous \$8 million deficit, they also stopped paying rent for the Teen Center, which is housed on Laurel Street in a building owned by George Ow Jr. The cen-

ter was set to move to Loudon Nelson Community Center until Ow agreed to temporarily waive the center's rent until supporters could figure out what to do next.

Now, though, city staff and services to the center also will be cut. That is expected to save \$365,000 annually. Shoemaker said she hopes Teen Center supporters follow the examples set by fans of the city's museums and Beach Flats Community Center. Supporters of the facilities are raising money to keep them going on their own.

Meanwhile, the need to assemble a committee to consider outsourcing operation of the Civic Auditorium and DeLaveaga golf course obviously troubled city leaders.

"To what extent do we want to make those drastic measures?" said Councilman Mike Rotkin, noting that most of the savings a private operator would

reap would be at the expense of worker salaries.

"The savings is in, basically, reducing people's wages," Rotkin said.

Santa Cruz is expected to lose \$265,369 running the Civic next year, while DeLaveaga, which normally operates at a profit, has needed extensive repairs in recent years and now boasts a \$2 million deficit.

Private operators would theoretically be able to spare the city the expense of running the facilities at a loss. Shoemaker said two parties have expressed interest in running the Civic.

The council expects that shuttering the Teen Center, on top of layoffs and concessions being negotiated with employees, would close the city's historic budget gap. Turning over the public venues to private operators is being considered in case more cuts are necessary.