

Watsonville council OKs cash for Freedom branch library

By **STETT HOLBROOK**

Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — It's a good time for libraries in Watsonville.

Plans for the construction of a huge new main library are in the works, and the construction of a new branch library is set to begin next month.

An architect is currently drawing up plans for the 40,000-square-foot main library. The library, which will be built on the 200 block of Main Street, will be an innovative three-story building that includes apartments on the third level and offices for Granite Rock Co.

The project is being developed by Barry Swenson Builders and Ow Family Properties, both local developers.

Tuesday, the City Council awarded a \$929,000 contract to Watsonville Construction Co. to convert a former fire station on Freedom Boulevard into a new library branch. The council's action includes an appropriation of

\$600,000 from the city's Measure B library fund to pay for the construction, furnishing and equipment for the project.

Watsonville Construction Co. was the second lowest bidder for the project. The low bidder dropped out of the running after the company learned it had made an error in its estimate.

The project will involve an extensive remodel of the 3,800-square-foot building, including interior demolition, building new restrooms to comply with handicap-access laws, upgrading electrical wiring, roof replacement and other improvements.

Construction is slated to begin Dec. 15, and is scheduled for completion May 15, said library director Deborah Barrow.

The branch library is in the running for a Gates Foundation grant for four computers, a server, software and training.

To help offset the cost of construction, the library plans to commission a public art piece for a donor wall. The artwork will in-

corporate the names of donors for display. The library has \$14,000 available for the commission, but hopes to recoup the cost of the commission through donations.

The commission is open to artists in Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties.

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