

Watsonville city manager's pay hike rescinded by council

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WATSONVILLE — Following a public hue and cry, the City Council unanimously voted Tuesday to rescind the pay raise granted last month to City Manager John Radin.

The issue of Radin's salary will go back to a committee composed of City Council members Betty Murphy, Parr Eves and Mayor Todd McFarren for further discussion.

The pay hike, to \$99,029 a year, amounted to a 34.8 percent raise on paper only, and had quickly become an Achilles' heel for the new council.

Council members said privately

they had received numerous complaints about their action. They moved two weeks ago to place the controversial issue back on the agenda for consideration.

The big raise caught all of the council but McFarren off guard. A negotiating committee of McFarren, Murphy and Eves approved a 5 percent pay hike for Radin in February.

But the deal for the 34.8 percent raise was subsequently worked out between McFarren and Radin and approved by City Attorney Luis Hernandez as a way of boosting the amount of Radin's salary that would be reported to the Public Employees Retirement System.

It would be accomplished by re-

porting Radin's benefits as income. PERS figures retirement benefits by averaging the last three years of a public employee's salary. Thus, a big hike in the last year's salary would substantially raise the amount Radin would receive in monthly pension checks.

The outgoing city manager stood to receive about \$5,000 a year more in pension upon his retirement later this year.

Without looking closely at the resolution, the council passed the pay raise without discussion Feb. 27.

Radin didn't speak at the meeting, but said in an earlier interview he'd fight to retain the pay hike.

Two city employees applauded

the council's decision to rescind the controversial raise.

Keith Times, a city employee, said the "manipulation of PERS through a slightly underhanded method is wrong, whether it's legal or not."

Times said if the City Council felt Radin was worth the extra money it would cost to raise his retirement by \$5,000 annually, the council ought to raise his salary, not manipulate the retirement system.

Kim Fisher, a Water Department employee, said the entire city work force appreciated the council's decision to take back the pay raise.

All employees, he said, are concerned about benefits and retirement.