

Curbside-recycling proposal suffers setback

By DAN FITCH
STAFF WRITER

The Watsonville City Council decided last night that curbside recycling is an idea whose time has yet to arrive in Watsonville.

After listening to City Manager John Radin explain the results of a Public Works Department study on the feasibility of a curbside program in Watsonville, council members discussed the subject and approved a motion directing the city staff to seek more information.

The discussion lasted over an hour and was often lively.

Radin discouraged a curbside

program on the grounds that it would prove too costly for the city and the individual customer. He also said the effects of the recently enacted "bottle bill" should be taken into account before the city embarks on a curbside program of its own.

The "bottle bill" requires all retail outlets that sell beverages in cans or bottles to set up centers where consumers can return the containers for a penny each.

Radin said the Public Works report shows that to start a curbside program, the city could have to "put out" over \$1 million and he said such funds

are not available from the Waste Disposal Department or any other source within the city.

He also said the program would have to be funded by a customer garbage-rate increase of up to \$4 per month per household.

Radin ended by saying that the city should look into other methods of disposal, such as an incinerator. He mentioned that the City of Commerce in Southern California operates an incinerator that burns 200 to 400 tons of garbage per day with "no measurable pollution problems."

Councilman Dennis Osmer rebutted Radin.

"The fact remains that in the City of Commerce, they spent \$50 million to build the (incineration) plant," he said. "It makes curbside look better when you consider the cost."

Osmer has promoted curbside recycling, along with Councilman Rex Clark, as a means to help alleviate the city's dumping problems.

The city has estimated that its current dump, located off San Andreas Road, will be full within two years.

Osmer said curbside programs are turning up nation-

wide and used San Jose's program as an example. San Jose recently embarked upon the largest public recycling program in the country, one that includes weekly pickup of tin, aluminum and glass.

Other council members appeared uncertain as to what action, if any, should be taken, and the group as a whole nearly voted on a motion that if passed would have approved a \$13,000 waste composition analysis that would tell the city exactly what makes up its trash.

Clark, who appeared on a recycling forum that aired on local cable television in December, remained silent

through the entire discussion but spoke up after everyone had voiced opinions.

"Recycling is a program whose time has come in Watsonville, which I've been saying for quite some time now," he said. "It's costly, but we're up to our neck in garbage and running out of places to put it."

"San Jose is the third largest city in the state and they went to it (curbside program), which sends a message. It is becoming a trend, and if it is successful in San Jose it can be successful in the whole state."