

✓ CF GANGS RP 4/11/89

# Council to discuss gang violence tonight

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A "gang intervention specialist" should be hired to deal with Watsonville's rising gang-violence problem, City Councilman Dennis Osmer will tell the council at tonight's meeting.

Osmer, who said he received several calls at home last week from citizens concerned about recent drive-by shootings, said he will recommend spending \$32,000 to fund the full-time position.

The council meets at 7:30 p.m. at City Hall.

Osmer acknowledged that the city's financial position is tight, but said "there's cause for alarm" over the drive-by shootings in the last few weeks. Funding the position would mean taking away from something else in the budget, because the city will need to make \$900,000 in cuts to balance its 1989-90 budget.

Two weeks ago, shots were fired at a group of youths as they stood in the parking lot of an apartment complex on Clifford Avenue. Last Wednesday, three young men with ties to the Poor Side

gang told police they were shot at by a member of the North Side gang as their vehicles passed at Second and Walker streets.

A 19-year-old man told police he was walking on Lincoln Street at Freedom Boulevard shortly before 3 p.m. yesterday when several youths in a passing car fired a shot at him. The victim, who police said is affiliated with the North Side gang, said his assailant was a Poor Sider. Nobody was hit in any of the three shootings.

Watsonville had a gang-violence prob-

lem in the late 1970s and early '80s, which decreased significantly in the mid-80s. But in the last year, the gangs have built up. The shooting death of Woody Sandoval in front of the city library last November increased tensions between the North Side and Poor Side, the two main gangs in Watsonville.

Most of the incidents involving gang members have been small — mainly involving name-calling and fighting — but things have escalated with the shootings in the last two weeks.

Osmer said he hopes a gang-

intervention specialist can reach gang members in a way parents or the police can't. For gang members, "the biggest problem is a lack of an influential adult in their lives," he said.

The intervention specialist would be an employee of the Recreation Department, Osmer said.

Police said they have a warrant for the arrest of the man accused of firing shots in the incident at Second and Walker streets last week. Amado Hernandez, 20, is charged with assault with a deadly weapon, said Detective Eddie Rodriguez.