

6/30/82

Budget Approved

# Political Wars At SC City Hall

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The Santa Cruz City budget, which had become a philosophical platform for the liberal majority of the Santa Cruz City Council, Tuesday night became a political weapon in the hands of two of the board's three moderates.

Mayor Michael Rotkin opened the meeting, saying, "This is a very important session as it sets the tone of where the council's going and where the city's going."

Moderates Joseph Ghio and John Mahaney made it clear from the start that they didn't like the liberal direction and spent the evening pointing out the fiscal sins of the liberals to an audience that in part had been invited through a newspaper ad run by Mahaney.

It was a standing room only audience, about evenly split between those who see no need for "giveaway"

community programs and those who support the child care and elderly food services.

The session opened with about 120 looking on and dwindled to nine stalwart public souls as the council cleared its final budget decisions at 11:45 p.m.

The result was a \$39.4 million budget. Although it's a 3 percent increase over last year, the city will end up losing 14 positions, due to rising costs to the city. All but two of those positions are not filled currently. The cutbacks affect those in middle management positions.

The budget will be formally approved on July 13.

The liberal bloc composed of progressives Mardi Wormhoudt and John Laird and socialists Bruce Van Allen and Mayor Michael Rotkin had received the good news Friday that the state was coming through with \$300,000 in motor vehicle money for the city to add to its \$39.4 million budget.

It made it easier for the liberals to increase support

for community programs and they set about adding \$172,862 to the \$107,998 recommended by City Manager Richard Wilson for the programs for women, children and the elderly.

Ghio immediately tried to block their actions by moving all revenue sharing money to the general fund which would have required review of all proposed allocations, but that died on a 2-5 vote with Councilman Spiro Mellis joining the liberals.

Mellis then took the middle-ground and moved Wilson's recommendations. That failed 3-4, the first of many moderate-liberal splits that became the order of the night.

Ghio then moved to guarantee that an allocation of over \$726,000 for fire and police programs would not be touched in the liberals' dipping into revenue sharing and reserves.

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Knowing that such a vote would put the programs beyond review, the liberals voted against the motion and took the political position of supporting community programs and being unwilling to protect law enforcement.

Laird asked Ghio directly, "What kind of political games are these?"

Whether intended or not, they probably provide ammunition for a meeting this morning that was being held this morning by some citizens and consultants to launch a recall move against the liberal bloc.

Ghio then said the council members don't need the full \$1,000 each they get every year for expense money and urged the public to go into the city clerk's office and check to see how the money is spent. Earlier, he has pointed out it's spent on lunches. He moved the \$1,000 be cut to \$250 and lost on a 3-4 vote with liberals against.

Mahaney attracted a lot of people to the session through a newspaper advertisement, but he was upset that the community service, Food and Nutrition Services, had taken out an ad in support of rent control early in June.

The ad cost around \$450 and Mahaney said that would have provided 150 meals at \$3 each to needy seniors and the disabled.

FNS Director Sam Karp told the press the money spent on the ad was "advocacy" money from the federal government and couldn't have been spent on food in any case.

Mahaney took a general shot at community programs and their directors, telling Karp he didn't like "the professional poor. Those who are educated to be professionals and make a living off the poor."

Karp replied to Dr. Mahaney, "I agree, physicians are needed in the community."

The council approved \$187,000 for improvements at Woodrow Avenue and \$228,000 to build the University Terrace Park.

The council hopes to sell the one-quarter acres Roundtree lot for upwards of \$60,000 to help defray development costs.

Wormhoudt was told by staff that all the \$228,000 would buy was lawn, sprinklers and a walkway. She said she didn't believe it.

The residential street sweeping program that took place every six weeks was canceled to save \$170,000 each year.

The council unanimously put the summer swim program back into the budget at a cost of \$6,787.

A motion by Wormhoudt to fund education and community awareness programs recommended by the

Commission for the Prevention of Violence Against Women put \$40,000 into a program fund. It passed on a 4-3 vote, liberals versus moderates.

Two police programs were put up for review, the educational and enforcement on bike travel and the community awareness programs. Bike enforcement had been funded by a grant and that had ceased and it is now costing the city \$115,000 a year.

The California Grey Bears and Project SCOUT were the only two community programs to get support from the moderate side.

All other votes were 4-3 with the liberals allocating the money.

California Grey Bears, \$12,671; Food and Nutrition Services transportation program, \$15,005 and Emergency Food Bank, \$20,000, and Project SCOUT, \$7,230.

Community Children's Center, \$15,000; Good Beginnings, \$20,000; Neighborhood Child Care Center, \$14,000, and Santa Cruz Toddler Care Center, \$20,000.

Mexicanos Unidos, \$15,000; Parents Center/Child Sexual Abuse, \$5,204; Youth Community Counseling, \$3,000; Battered Women's Shelter, \$15,000, and Santa Cruz Women's Health Center, \$17,500.

City Arts Commission, \$30,250; Cultural Council, \$10,000; Santa Cruz Hostel Society, \$1,000, and the Westside Community Helath Center got \$33,000.