

City voters barely approve pay hike for City Council

The Watsonville ballot measure that would allow the City Council to give itself a pay raise squeaked by the voters with only 43 votes to spare.

The situation was somewhat confused this morning by the fact that, based on news from the polls last night, the Santa Cruz Sentinel and KOMY Radio this morning predicted defeat for Measure C. But after the final vote was counted at 1:13 a.m., it was discovered the measure passed 2,086 to 2,043, with 514 voters choosing not to vote on the issue.

The vote amounts to a 1 percent margin — 50.5 percent to 49.5 percent. The council must still pass an ordinance adopting the raise, which would bring council members' monthly salaries from \$50 to \$300, and the mayor's from \$150 to \$400.

While Councilman Dennis Osmer said this morning he was not sure the raise would get by the council, he was elated that Measure C had made it past the voters. He said he had stated prior to being elected that he would try to raise the pay level.

"I said if I wasn't worth

more than 50 bucks a month, then don't vote for me," he said.

That kind of money doesn't even cover the cost of his monthly phone calls related to council business, he said, not to mention gas and other expenses.

Mayor Betty Murphy said she was also pleased Measure C had passed, adding that the raise, should it pass the council, could be the first one in the city's history. The dollar amount was first set down in Watsonville's 1960 charter, but might have been the same since the city was formed just after the turn of the century, she said.

"Everybody's saying that they've (council members) been making \$50 since 1960," she said. "I think they've been making \$50 since the city got its first charter."

Murphy said she was also happy to hear that the other measure on Watsonville residents' ballots — Measure B, the affordable-housing measure — sailed through on a 2-1 margin.

Measure B would allow the Housing Authority of Santa Cruz County to build 96 afford-

able housing units in the city, provided they're spread out to a maximum of 16 units per development.

The final vote was 2,822 for the measure and 1,368 against, which translates into 67.4 to 32.6 percent.

Mary James, executive director of the Housing Authority, said she was pleased with the vote and has no problem with the 16-unit limit, since one of the agency's goals is to disperse affordable housing units in such a manner that their occupants feel part of the community.

James recalled a phrase in a recent Register-Pajaronian editorial which she said aptly summed up the agency: "The Housing Authority's purpose is to integrate, not to isolate."

Watsonville voters passed a similar measure for 80 affordable housing units in 1980, James said, and indications before yesterday's election were that Measure B would have no trouble passing.

She said the vote is both a reflection of the Housing Authority's good reputation and of Watsonville residents' priorities.

"The citizens of Watsonville do care about having affordable housing in their community," she said.