

City's '83-84 budget ready — no plans for additional officers

By STEVE SHENDER

The Watsonville City Council finished its preliminary deliberations on the city's \$30.9 million 1983-84 budget Tuesday evening, approving spending plans for the police and fire departments with minimal discussion.

No mention was made of Police Chief Ray Belgard's proposal to hire two additional police officers to crack down on drunk driving in town. Belgard has applied for a grant from the state Office of Traffic Safety to finance the drunk driving program. Grant funds would pay 100 percent of the program's cost in the first year and 50 percent in the second year.

But City Manager John Radin declined to include the two proposed new positions in the budget because of concern over the city's ability to pick up the program's costs in subsequent years. Belgard believes that all or most of the costs could eventually be covered by increased drunk driving fine revenues.

The city manager said after

Tuesday night's study session that the drunk driving enforcement program will be brought to the council for consideration if the city's grant application is approved by the state. Belgard said today that he was optimistic that the application will be approved and said the city should hear from state officials on the matter in 45 to 60 days.

While the council had little to say about the police department budget Tuesday evening, council members had a number of questions about a plan to turn part of the police station's second floor into a new home for the Watsonville Municipal Court.

Mayor Ann Soldo and Councilman Roy Ingersoll said they were concerned about parking problems and foot traffic which would be created by the proposed court facility and Councilman Vido Deretich worried that the rent Radin was proposing to charge the county for 7,000 square feet of courtroom and office space was too low.

Radin told the council that in preliminary discussions about the new courtroom with county officials, a 55-cents-a-square-foot monthly rental charge had been mentioned. But Deretich said that the rent, which would come to about \$3,500 a month, would be eaten up by increased utility costs (there is only one utility meter for the entire police station). "We'll have no return on a \$600,000 investment," he complained.

Councilman Rex Clark, a real estate broker, said that the city ought to charge the county at least 75 cents a square foot for the second floor court facility, which would be built by the city and leased to the county for 10 years.

In other matters Tuesday night:

—Council members affirmed that construction of a storm drain to reduce flooding in Pajaro and Bay villages would have top priority in the coming fiscal year and authorized

Public Works Director John Cooper to conduct an engineering study on the project.

—Councilman Clark asked for an audit of Central Business Improvement District (CBID) funds, asking, "Is it (CBID) really doing anything for downtown business — which is what it was designed to do?" The CBID's 1983-84 budget, raised from an assessment on downtown businesses, is \$18,000.

—Mayor Soldo was rebuffed in a request to her fellow council members for consideration of a \$5,000 contribution to the Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County. Councilman Frank Osmer said that while he supported the Cultural Council's program, "it should be privately financed," and Deretich said the city's money would be better spent fixing potholes in the streets.

The budget is to be approved by the council next Tuesday evening, following a public hearing.