

# Watsonville council wants to mediate

**WATSONVILLE** — For the first time in the 38-day-long frozen-food processing plant strike here, city officials have decided to try to intervene.

Council members voted 6-0 Tuesday night to invite officials of Watsonville Canning and Frozen Food Co. and Richard Shaw Frozen Food, as well as representatives of the Teamsters Union Local 912, to meet with them "in an attempt to find common ground."

The request originated from Councilman Rex Clark. He maintained it was time to offer the city as arbitrators "and for us to exert our leadership to bring the parties of the strike together before there is more

property loss and bloodshed."

Clark added that the situation has accelerated beyond just a labor dispute. He said, "It could now have as devastating an impact on our city as a major flood or earthquake."

Failing a voluntary mediation with the parties involved, Clark is prepared to use the city's "full power of subpoena" to get discussions going.

Federal mediators have been called in involving the Shaw dispute. Two sessions have been held, with no positive results. However, no negotiations with Watsonville Canning have been held.

Up to now, the city has remained neutral in the strike, which has

placed nearly 2,000 workers at Watsonville's two largest processing plants out of work. Police have attempted to enforce a Santa Cruz County Superior Court order that limits the number and location of pickets outside the two plants.

However, violence has continued to increase on the strike lines. For four nights in a row — from Thursday through Sunday — rocks were thrown and fires set on streets around Watsonville Canning. A large warehouse was partially burned in a "suspicious" fire that is still being investigated.

Mayor Ann Soldo has conceded the strike is "polarizing" the community.