

CP Earthquake 1101

# Quake fallout

Watsonville - Rebuilt

## puts squeeze

RP 6/18/91

## on chamber

The Pajaro Valley Chamber of Commerce is still feeling the effects of the 1989 earthquake, and "scaling back" is the theme for the year.

In March, chamber president Carol Wix had to go to the Watsonville City Council to ask for help. Facing a deficit of \$137,000, the chamber asked for and received a two-year low-interest loan of \$50,000. The loan was granted on several conditions, including placing the city finance director on a new committee that will review chamber financial matters. The city also agreed to let the chamber use its offices above Wells Fargo Bank rent-free.

The chamber cut its full-time staff from six to two employees, and trimmed hours for its three part-time employees.

The search has dragged on for a replacement for executive director Charlene Shaffer, who resigned abruptly in January. Wix said this week that the chamber board is still going over resumes and that it hopes to hire a new director next month.

The chamber has followed through on Wix's vow to get back to the "nuts and bolts" of operations this year, a focus that may have been part of the reason for Shaffer's resignation. It has few if any big events in the works this year, and is holding fewer mixers. Its Agricultural Committee has decided to disband, saying that its efforts are duplicated by other groups.

Meanwhile, the modulars the chamber brought in with a state grant after the earthquake to house displaced small businesses have become something of a problem. Ford's department store has asked the chamber to remove the cluster of modulars located on its parking lot by July 31 so that it can begin repaving for its grand reopening in October.

"They're on schedule, and we can't hold them up," Wix said.

Wix said the chamber has a real estate broker working on relocating the modular tenants. The chamber holds the master lease on the modulars; Wix has called that "our downfall." The chamber is negotiating with Mobile Modulars of Fremont in an attempt to get out of the lease agreements for the modulars that are going back early.

—Susanna Heckman