

# Spring planting for fake seaweed

By BOB SMITH

Capitola will begin planting a forest of artifical seaweed this spring below its crumbling Grand Avenue cliffs in the hopes of building a new beach and stabilizing the cliff face.

The experiment will cost the city and cliff-top property owners \$164,000, with the cost split approximately 45-55 between the city and the property owners.

The "seaweed" consists of long rows of specially-manufactured fabric. At the base will be a large tube filled with sand to anchor the "seaweed" to the ocean bottom. Four-foot-long fronds with tiny plastic bubble packs float above the anchors.

The fronds capture tiny grains of sands that float down the coastline each year and slowly build up a beach.

The installations have been successful behind the Los Angeles breakwater at Long Beach and on the Great Lakes and Atlantic coast in restoring eroded beaches. But the Capitola installation is the first time that the new material has been tested in an open ocean environment on the Pacific coast.

The City Council and the property owners have been warned that the scheme is "experimental" and might not work.

But the idea of a "low cost" beach, when compared to multi-million-dollar concrete and rip-rap seawalls, is so attractive that the council decided to go ahead with it.

The City Council last Thursday night approved a budget for the project. Installation of 7,000 feet of the seaweed material in seven 1,000-foot rows along the beach will cost \$119,000.

The city will spend another \$25,000 on a geologic report and \$10,000 on an environmental report for the project. A \$10,000 insurance premium payment to Lloyd's of London for liability

insurance will raise the final cost to \$164,000.

The city will pay a total of \$77,598.16 for the work. The remaining \$86,401.84 will be paid by Grand Avenue property owners.

The City Council Thursday night approved a \$15,100 contract with Santa Cruz consulting geologist Rogers Johnson to prepare a topographical map and shoreline profiles for the project.

City officials held a meeting early last week with the Grand Avenue property owners to discuss the project. City Manager Steve Burrell told the council that there was general support for the project, which is being billed by city officials as "experimental."

According to Mayor Ron Graves, many property owners said that they knew the experiment was a gamble but said the alternative of rip-rap to protect the crumbling cliffs and their cliff-top homes was so much more expensive that the gamble was worth it.

Assessments are dependent on the front footage of the individual property owner. The Crest Apartments are being assessed 2.5 times the amount paid by other owners along the cliffs because, according to Burrell, they will gain the most benefit from the seaweed if it works.

The Crest Apartment assessment totals \$31,970.30. Assessments for individual lots range from a low of \$3,066.07 to a high of \$3,436.73.

The city is paying the proportionate share of the cost for several unbuildable lots next to the Crest Apartments and the areas represented by Centrall, Saxon, Oakland Hollister and Sacramento avenues.

In other business Thursday night, the City Council:

- ✓ Continued an application from Fast Eddy's Billiards, 4300 Capitola Road, for a live entertainment music permit. The council wanted more information on the permit and possible noise problems.

- ✓ Adopted an ordinance

amending the city's procedures for dealing with the California Environmental Quality Act.

- ✓ Approved a resolution authorizing Police Chief Bob Allen to destroy old police department records not part of a civil or criminal case. Allen now has the authority to destroy or erase radio and telephone tape recordings over one year old; records of expired licenses and permits over three years old including bicycle licenses and parking permits; lost and found items more than two years; incident reports more than two years old; roll call, teletype, daily bulletin and logs over two years old; crime and supplemental reports of incidents over two years old, misdemeanors over three years old, and felo-

nies over seven years old.

Councilman Dennis Beltram voted against the resolution, objecting to the section that allows Allen to destroy records of citizens complaints about or investigations of police officers more than five years old. Allen said the records are now permanently sealed, by state law, at the five year mark, and the resolution allows him to destroy information that could never be revealed to anyone anyway.

- ✓ Adopted a series of resolutions setting up a street improvement district for the Derby-Trotter area of Capitola.

- ✓ Delayed action on a request from Save Our Shores to pass a resolution supporting the designation of Monterey Bay as a marine sanctuary.