



Mike McCollum

Ray Belgard, first board chairman from Watsonville since Cecil Smith in 1978.

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Supervisors welcome new member, chairman

By LANE WALLACE
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For a half hour this morning, it was all bliss at the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors meeting.

Everybody was congratulating everybody else as new Supervisor Walt Symons was seated and Watsonville-area Supervisor Ray Belgard was elected chairman of the board for 1993.

A number of Belgard's friends from his days as Watsonville Police Chief and chief inspector for the District Attorney's Office showed up to see him become the first board chairman from Watsonville since Cecil Smith in 1978.

In a prepared speech, Belgard said government cannot take a "business-as-usual" attitude during the recession and must look toward new public-private partnerships.

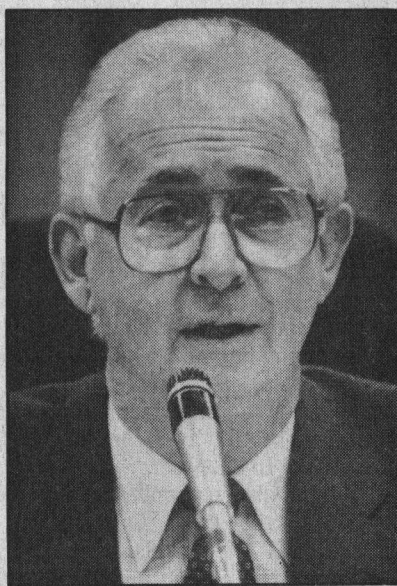
"We must balance economic as well as environmental realities," said Belgard, who said finding more jobs for people is a key issue in the Pajaro Valley.

"I have been labeled as a conservative as if that were a bad word," Belgard said. "If being a conservative means being fiscally prudent, if having respect for the individual and his or her dignity is conservative, if believing hard work is a conservative, then I am a conservative."

Supervisor Fred Keeley, a liberal, recommended Belgard for the chairmanship. With Keeley's support, Belgard's election was a foregone conclusion, and the vote for Belgard was unanimous.

The chairman runs meetings and oversees preparation of the agenda, but his vote counts the same as other supervisors.

Belgard had kind words for Gary Patton, the ultra-liberal su-



Walt Symons, newest member of the board.

pervisor who was named vice chairman.

"He's most helpful. He remembers everything," said Belgard, making light of the fact that Patton sits to his left. While at opposite ends politically, Belgard and Patton have had cordial relations since Belgard joined the board two years ago.

Symons had praise for Robley Levy, who lost her bid for a fourth term on the board. Symons said he is "grateful for her 12 years of service. I want to wish her well."

Symons praised the people who worked on his campaign, many of whom were present this morning. He said it was a grassroots campaign that included people from all walks of life and was not a political "machine."

Watsonville Mayor Oscar Rios addressed the board, saying inter-government cooperation is important. "We are not just a secluded little area," he said.