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Watsonville

council sure to change

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There will be at least two new faces on the Watsonville City Council after the May 9 election. Two of the three incumbents whose seats are up for election — Rex Clark and Joe Marsano — are not going to seek re-election.

Clark announced last night he was stepping down after serving five terms (20 years) on the city's governing body. This morning, Joe Marsano said he had also decided to call it quits after two terms. Gwen Carroll, the third council member whose seat is up for election, has already declared her intention to seek re-election.

In making his announcement, Clark said he had no plans to run for any other political office, but, "I've learned never to say never."

Clark said he reached his decision yesterday afternoon, after spending the weekend in consultation with his family. He had said last week he was undecided and would confer with his wife and two children before making up his mind.

He announced his decision not to run during last night's oral communications section of the agenda, reading an autobiographical letter more than two pages long.

The letter summarized his public-service career, starting in 1962, when then-Mayor Fred Flodberg asked him to fill a vacancy on the city's Planning Commission.

"Little did I realize when I said yes to Fred," Clark wrote, "that it would begin an odyssey of political activities that would change my life beyond my wildest dreams."

The letter listed the opportunities Clark has had during his political career, including becoming one of fewer than 100 people in the state's history to preside over the League of California Cities. He has met three United States presidents and numerous governors, senators, congressmen and congresswomen, state legislators, mayors and council members, he noted.

Clark also recalled coping with decisions facing Watsonville from the financial ramifications of Proposition 13, downtown redevelopment and growth pressures.

"And, of course," he wrote, "the Supreme Court of the United States must yet resolve the MALDEF suit."

That was a reference to the battle over whether the

city will be forced to change from its existing system of electing council members at large to a system of election by districts.

Many people have expressed support for Clark's candidacy for another term, he said, and he was confident he could win.

"But there comes a time to lay down the baton and pursue other interests," he wrote.

He thanked the mayors, council members and city staff with whom he's worked during his more than 26 years of public service, as well as his friends and family.

"I simply hope that for whatever I may have been able to accomplish," he concluded, "when the history of Watsonville is written, people will be able to say, 'Rex made things a little better.'"

After announcing last night that he still had not made a decision, Marsano this morning said he won't seek re-election. He said he wanted to spend more time with his family.

The decision of the two incumbents not to run means the filing period for candidates will extend to Tuesday. It would have closed tomorrow if all three incumbents had decided to run.

Other Watsonville residents who have announced their candidacy are businessman Luis De La Cruz, a former elementary school principal who serves on the city's Planning Commission; Rebecca Garcia, a teacher and president of the local League of United Latin American Citizens; labor lawyer Todd McFarren, who has been active in the Democratic party; and Jeffrey Solinas, a family doctor who runs the Plazita Medical Clinic in downtown Watsonville.

Robert Chacanaca, who made an unsuccessful bid for the mayoral position two years ago, said this week he was also considering running for the council.

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