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# City officials groan about budget slashes

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Watsonville's city officials discussed what they hope to do — and what they won't be able to do — in the coming year in a budget study session yesterday.

Four department heads went over the proposed budgets for their departments, explaining planned programs to the City Council, and in some cases, telling the council what they wouldn't be able to do within the constraints suggested by the city manager. Although department heads were mostly resigned to the limits, there were a few tense moments.

Library Director Vivian Hurley

was clearly upset with the city manager's proposed library budget.

The preliminary budget allows \$701,657 for the library, an increase of 9 percent over last year's budget of \$644,587. But it's \$85,930 less than Hurley had requested.

Even though the dollar amount is higher, she said, rising costs will more than eat that up, and "the level of service will be lower than the current level as a result."

The library's level of service is already lower than the standards set by the American Library Association, Hurley said. The association recommends that a li-

brary stay open between 66 and 72 hours a week; Watsonville's stays open 54. The association recommends that libraries purchase the equivalent of 15 to 20 percent of its holdings each year; Watsonville will buy 4 percent under the proposed budget. For a city the size of Watsonville, the association recommends staffing of 5 professional librarians and 10 library assistants and clerks; Watsonville has three professional librarians, one part-time, and seven assistant librarians and clerks. Pages, she said, are still paid minimum wage.

With funds cut for training and equipment, she said she didn't know how the staff was going to be able to operate more efficiently,

one of the goals the city manager has for the city.

City Manager Steve Salomon is recommending that the council take another look at several items in October, when it has a better idea of how things are going financially, and increased funding for books is one of them, he said. Although pages are making minimum wage, Salomon said, some library staffers were moved from temporary to permanent positions this year, which means they are now getting benefits.

Salomon told the council that a lot of libraries are laying people off and making even bigger cutbacks than Watsonville is.

"Those libraries that are laying off started out ahead of us," countered Hurley.

She pointed out that the library's service area is much greater than the city limits, and that if she took into account the outlying area served, the library would be even further from meeting the library association's standards. She also said state funds were diminishing and that the county has not kept up with its payments to the city library.

Mayor Todd McFarren asked Hurley what she'd do if she had another \$10,000.

"I'd buy books," she said.

Planning Director Maureen

Owens began her presentation by outlining all of the tasks her staff carries out — everything from answering questions from the public from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to coordinating earthquake recovery and working on ordinances. Owens had asked that a half-time temporary associate planner position, scheduled to end soon, be made permanent, and had been turned down. As a result, she said, there would be a slowdown of project processing and work on special projects.

McFarren asked how much an associate planner would cost.

Salomon replied that he'd received approximately \$1.55 million

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in personnel requests from the various department heads this year, "most of which... I could make a case for." Salomon is only recommending four full-time and three part-time positions. If the council wants to increase city staff, he said, "you're going to have to raise revenues, and I think you're going to have to hear that."

"We were just curious, Steve, that's all," said McFarren.

Owens emphasized that she wasn't arguing with Salomon. She just wanted the council to know the consequences of dropping the half-time position, she said.

"I don't think the service is going to drop significantly," she said.

Police Chief Terry Medina said only one of the 3½ positions requested by the department were approved, but he said, he was "certainly not in an adversary position" with Salomon.

Medina said his department's goals for the year include increasing foot patrol downtown and beefing up traffic enforcement and maintaining gang and crime prevention efforts. By the beginning of the next fiscal year, the department is planning to move to a 10-hour, four-day-a-week schedule, and more officers will be added then.

The police department also has plans for the dog pound. Negotiations with the SPCA are ongoing, but, Salomon said, it looks like the SPCA will contract with the city to house animals at its Live Oak shelter for the next year. Watsonville will continue to provide animal control. Salomon said the city wants this arrangement for a year while it explores its options and sees how well work with the SPCA goes.

David Koch, the assistant public works director, noting the large budgets for the sewer, solid-waste disposal and water departments, said appearances may be deceiving. Those departments are planning a number of special projects, including the curbside recycling program, which are being funded by a variety of means, and many other increases are due to new regulations and the increasing costs of chemicals and power. Koch will be proposing increases in fees for all three services.

Goals include the implementation of curbside recycling, landfill design and expansion, development of a yard-waste-collection program, joining the county in three landfill-related studies, beginning a water-conservation program and repairs to an earthquake-damaged water main and to the Corralitos filter plant.

The council will be holding at least two more budget study sessions and a public hearing on the budget.