

# Marinovich Bldg. to fall on Thursday

By KEN McLAUGHLIN

Wells Fargo Bank will begin demolishing the 81-year-old Marinovich Building on Thursday unless a court order prevents the bank from doing so, a senior vice president of Wells Fargo said this morning.

Dan Livingston, who works in the bank's main office in San Francisco, said bank officials evaluated alternatives to the demolition Monday afternoon, but decided in the end to proceed with the bank's original plans. The decision was made in a meeting that followed a 1 p.m. meeting with city officials and Monte Lewis.

Wells Fargo wants to tear down the building to add 18 spaces to its Peck Street parking lot, which now has 18 spaces.

Lewis said before the meeting that he saw his role as a "facilitator" interested in examining alternatives to the wrecking ball. After the meeting he advised Chuck Rowe, a leader in the drive to save the building, to quickly find a place to move the building.

Rowe said late this morning that he intended to drive this afternoon to the state Court of Appeal in San Francisco with environmental attorney Zan Henson. The lawyer, he said, will seek a writ of supersedeas to temporarily prevent the bank from tearing down the building, which sits at Peck and Union streets across from the city Plaza.

He said, however, that he is worried that the stay will not be granted in time.

If granted, the stay would result in a lengthy court battle during which time the bank would be legally prohibited from demolishing the building. Rowe said Henson feels he has a "50-50 chance" of getting the stay from the appeals court.

Last week, Santa Cruz County

Superior Court Judge Chris Cottle had lifted a temporary restraining order that had prevented the bank from tearing down the Victorian building. But Monday lawyers for Wells Fargo, the city of Watsonville and the Preservation Defense Fund agreed in Cottle's chambers to delay the demolition until Thursday.

Representing the preservationists was the Santa Cruz law firm of Page and Coben. The firm was asked to intercede in the case last Friday because Henson was out-of-town on a skiing vacation.

Lawyers for the Preservation Defense Fund had asked for a stay preventing demolition until the preservationists had time to file an appeal, but agreed to settle for the oral agreement stopping the demolition until at least Thursday.

Tom Brown, attorney for Page and Coben, said that Wells Fargo lawyers and Watsonville City Attorney Don Haile had argued that demolition shouldn't be halted. Attorneys for the bank, Brown said, told Cottle that the bank planned on beginning demolition of the building Monday at 3 p.m., assuring that the 1 p.m. meeting was non-productive.

Representing the city at the meeting were City Manager John Radin, Redevelopment Director Russ Hoss and Mike D'Amico, a San Francisco consultant whose firm was recently hired to do a master plan for the downtown.

According to Monte Lewis, several alternatives to demolition were discussed, but he said he couldn't reveal what they were. Livingston this morning also declined to discuss the alternatives, saying he would prefer to do that "at a later date."

Livingston said he has received "a constant flow of information" during the past several weeks and is convinced Wells Fargo is making the right decision.

He said he realized there was "strong interest" in saving the building, but felt the interest is "in conflict with other interests" — namely, assuring that Wells Fargo will be able to stay at its Main and Peck location. He said he hoped Wells Fargo would provide an "anchor" for downtown redevelopment.

Livingston said the bank has received 11 letters protesting the demolition. Four of the letters, he said, came from Watsonville. Five came from Santa Cruz, one from San Francisco and the other from Sacramento.

Surveys by bank officials downtown, he said, have indicated that bank customers overwhelmingly support the demolition.

Rowe said this morning, however, that he will ask Wells Fargo customers to withdraw funds from the bank's Santa Cruz County offices as a form of protest.

Pat Pirtle, a member of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association, said this morning that she felt Wells Fargo will come to regret the decision.

"I feel it's very shortsighted on the bank's part," she said, maintaining that not just fervent preservationists oppose the demolition. Many average citizens, especially those who value the plaza and the city's history, feel the demolition is wrong, she said.

She predicted that the "layer of asphalt" that Wells Fargo plans to create will result in more crime because it will encourage loitering around the plaza.

Hoffman and Associates, the design and development firm that restored the Mansion House, is interested in buying the building and rehabilitating the Marinovich Building. But according to Jeff Hoffman, the bank doesn't want to negotiate with the firm.

"They've refused to talk with me," Hoffman said this morning.