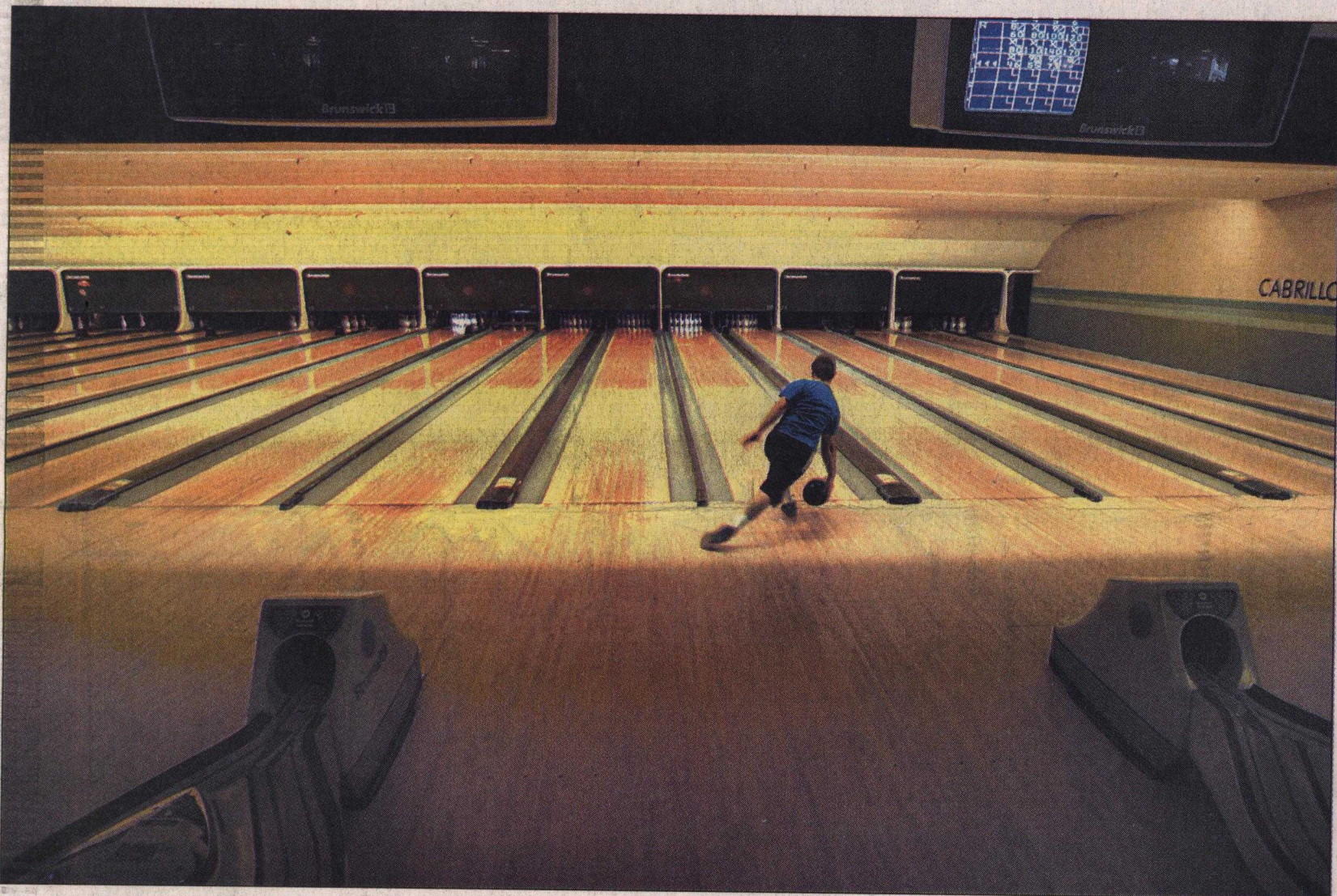


# Watsonville alley closes



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Nick Johnson bowls solo at Cabrillo Lanes in Watsonville on Tuesday. Today is the bowling alley's final day of operation.

## City pins its hopes on keeping the ball rolling somewhere

By BRIAN SEALS  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — An end of a bowling era comes today in Watsonville, though some in the community are grasping for ways to keep the ball rolling in South County. Somewhere.

AMF Bowling Centers, which owns AMF Cabrillo Lanes, will close the facility today, according to Mike Anderson, spokesman for Richmond,

Va.-based company. He said the Watsonville bowling alley was not performing up to the company's financial expectations. AMF, which operates 384 bowling alleys across the country, is in Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Property owner George Tosello of Watsonville declined comment Tuesday. AMF began leasing and operating the center in 1997 from Tosello.

In the meantime, a group of bowling enthusiasts and community lead-

ers, which includes City Council members Antonio Rivas, Dale Skillicorn as well as Planning Commissioner Peter Stoll, are pushing for a bowling alley and recreation center and hope to keep Cabrillo Lanes.

Tuesday, Rivas said investors are being sought. They hope to meet again in a couple weeks.

"It looks promising," Rivas said.

Skillicorn said the group wants to strike a deal with the Seaside Co., now in negotiations to buy the prop-

erty, to keep the lanes open at least temporarily.

"It just boils down to there's a bunch of us doing our darnedest to make sure we have a bowling alley one way or another," Skillicorn said.

John Robinson, spokesman for the Seaside Co., which owns the Santa Cruz Boardwalk, said, "We're still examining it to see if it is the investment we think it could be."

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The location would make an ideal candidate for a car dealership, Robinson said, though he declined to comment further.

Charles Canfield, president of the Seaside Co., owns Toyota of Santa Cruz.

Robinson said the company has looked at keeping it as a bowling alley, but that doing so would take millions in building improvements.

In October 2001, the Seaside Co. launched a \$3.5 million remodeling of its Boardwalk Bowl on Cliff Street in Santa Cruz, which it completed last year. Seaside Co. bought the Santa Cruz bowling alley in 1994.

Still, Robinson said the company wants to work with the community to keep the lanes open temporarily if its deal to buy the property comes to fruition.

"We have been talking with people in Watsonville about the possibility of keeping the bowling center open for a set time period," Robinson said.

Among the details that would need to be worked out are who would operate it and who would lease it.

Bowling aficionados and townsfolk say Cabrillo Lanes is a community jewel that will be missed.

They say Cabrillo Lanes is more than a bowling alley. It's a social center that provides recreation for all ages and a safe hangout for the city's youth.

"I'm sorry for the people of Wat-



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Don Howe of Watsonville bowled one last game at Cabrillo Lanes on Tuesday. He started bowling there in 1961.

sonville," said Sharon Hada, who was at a Tuesday morning game with three friends.

She said the bowling alley is a social outlet for kids not old enough to drive.

"The 12-, 13-, 14-year-olds, where are

they going to go?" Hada said.

Don Howe of Watsonville has been knocking over the pins there since 1961.

"I think it will be missed by a lot of people," Howe said after finishing a game around lunchtime Tuesday. "What else will seniors or kids have

to do?"

The departure of Cabrillo Lanes would make the Seaside Co. bowling alley the only one left in the county.

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