

Budget crisis could hike parking rates in Beach Area

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Beach Area parking could soon be more expensive — twice as much, in some cases — if the city goes ahead with a plan to hike meter fees near the Boardwalk.

More than 200 meters that charge 50 cents an hour could charge **SANTA CRUZ** \$1 an hour by late June. The other 442 meters, which charge 75 cents, would charge a dollar.

The measure is the city's latest response to a fiscal crisis that prompted a \$1 million budget cut last month. The council has given preliminary approval, and this afternoon its members will decide whether to spend \$200,000 for the upgrade.

Between September 2001 and August 2002, Beach Area meters generated \$516,390. If the fee increases go into effect, the city would

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earn an extra \$232,000 a year.

The posts and casings won't be replaced, but the city wants to upgrade the mechanisms.

One merchant, who asked to remain anonymous, said he's fine with the meter rate increase because it will drive more customers into the free lot at his store. But a few others said they were edgy about higher fees during an economic downturn.

City Parking Manager Matt Farrell said

2-11-03
fees would be comparable to nearby cities. Capitola charges \$1 an hour for Esplanade parking, as does Monterey.

The meters are in a section of the city extending from south of Laurel Street to the beach, and between Bay Avenue and the San Lorenzo River.

The City Council could take a final vote tonight sealing the fate of the Citizen's Police Review Board, the first city task force to be rolled back because of the budget cuts. Two weeks ago, the city held first reading on a vote to dismantle the ordinance that created the CPRB almost 10 years ago.

The volunteer group's meetings deal with allegations of police mistreatment.

The council also will discuss endorsing legislation to impose a fee on the alcohol industry to fund youth recovery centers.

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