



Mike McCollum

City Manager-designate Steve Salomon, foreground, and Mayor Todd McFarren.

✓ CP Watsonville 10/6/91 Politics & Government

Watsonville's new city manager

Council members enthusiastic about choice

By SUSANNA HECKMAN
STAFF WRITER

Watsonville Mayor Todd McFarren said that when he and other City Council members were thinking of hiring Albany City Administrator Steve Salomon for the city's top administrative post, they went to talk to community leaders in Albany for references.

"They're mad we're stealing him," McFarren said.

Which, he added, gave him a pretty good idea what kind of job Salomon was doing.

"He walked into the interview having really done his homework — he had detailed thoughts about our budget, and how we could increase revenue and cut fat," McFarren said. "When we pushed him, he backed the ideas up with details."

"He has a lot of creative ideas, and he's a comprehensive, detail-oriented, thorough, hands-on man," he added.

When council members met him in his Albany office, McFarren said, Salomon literally had his sleeves rolled up.

Salomon will take over as city manager Nov. 26. His wage package will be on Tuesday's City Council agenda.

McFarren said the decision was tough. About 70 people applied for the job. Among the top four were Interim City Manager Chuck Comstock and two Hispanics.

McFarren said, however, that the council was heavily influenced by the panel of business and community organization leaders that interviewed finalists, and Salomon was the first or second choice of

most of the panelists.

Councilman Oscar Rios said that in addition to Salomon's demonstrated business acumen, he had specific ideas about ways to reach affirmative action goals, and he brought the subject up himself without being asked.

"I liked how he was able to express himself; he was very open," Rios said.

The council also liked the fact that Salomon committed himself to learning Spanish, Rios and McFarren said.

Salomon himself said that he was excited about the challenging nature of the job — guiding Watsonville through the recovery from the earthquake, increasing its affordable housing, diversifying its tax base and keeping wages for its

city staff competitive.

Albany is about half the size of Watsonville, he said, but is similar in that it is ethnically diverse and has strong community involvement in local government.

Before running the city of Albany for 3½ years, Salomon held the top city position in Hercules for four years, and before that, he worked in the city manager's office in Concord for seven years. His first job out of college was with the federal Housing and Urban Development program.

The 42-year-old native of West Virginia holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Cincinnati, and a master's degree in city planning from Ohio State University. He is married and has three children, ages 11, 8 and 5.