

Watsonville candy maker plans move to Hollister

By EMILIO ALVARADO

STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — Marich Confections, a Watsonville candy manufacturer, has been offered a sweeter deal in Hollister. So sweet, in fact, that the company, along with its 60 employees, plans to move there.

Marinus van Dam, president of Marich Confections, said the company will move to Hollister in 1997. The company plans to build a 60,000-square-foot plant in the city.

The move to Hollister is a matter of dollars and cents.

Van Dam said it is difficult, if not impossible, to find affordable land in Watsonville on which to expand his business. Land costs about \$5 per square foot in Watsonville. In Hollister, the cost is about \$1.50 per square foot.

Not only is land cheaper in Hollister, the city put icing on the cake by waving a number of fees and promising to expedite all the necessary paperwork to put the project on a "fast track."

Stanley Hall, Hollister city manager, put the reasons for his city

CANDY

From page 1

winning over Marich in a candid and succinct manner: "The community has what it takes for the bottom line: low-cost land, available labor, and transportation access. Now the city is backing this up with financial incentives and pure service in helping firms to get their facilities up and running."

That kind of attitude and governmental support helped persuade West Marine in Watsonville to build its 162,000-square-foot warehouse in Hollister. Less than two weeks ago, West Marine, one of the nation's largest retailers of boating products, announced it would keep its headquarters in Watsonville, but would build the warehouse in Hollister.

Van Dam, 66, a native of Holland, came to the United States in 1957 with \$50 in his pocket. Eleven years ago, he started the company. He turned the small operation into multi-million dollar business, which has had an annual growth rate of 34 percent.

Van Dam said he has mixed feelings about leaving

Watsonville, but the bottom line makes sense not only for his business but for his employees, too.

Van Dam said the quality of life in Hollister was one of the reasons he was attracted to the community. The city offers good schools and a lower crime rate, he said. Watsonville and other communities along the coast also have an attractive quality of life, but "Hollister doesn't take a back seat to any of them," he said.

Lower housing costs in Hollister also played a key role, van Dam said. The lower price of houses is good news for his employees, he said.

"For the first time in their lives they will have a chance to buy a house," van Dam said. "Who can buy a house in Watsonville? You need a substantial income to buy one here."

The company just completed a \$300,000 expansion. Van Dam said some may question the company's decision to go ahead with the expansion when it plans to move in a couple of years.

Van Dam explains: "The world doesn't stop." You have to take care of business today, he added.

See CANDY, back of section