

Citizens seek vote on fluoride

Fluoridation 201
File notice of intent
to circulate petition

By PETER NICHOLS
FOR THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

Three City residents, representing Watsonville Citizens for Safe Drinking Water, filed a Notice of Intent to Circulate Petitions seeking to reverse the City Council's decision to fluoridate the municipal water supply.

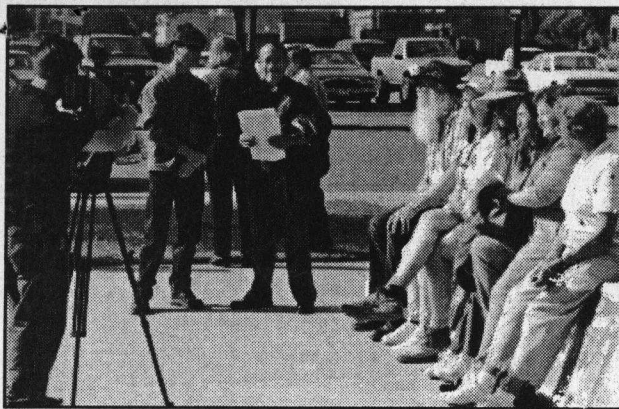
The three, Karell Reader, Dan Hernandez, and Paul McCain, filed the papers early Thursday morning and immediately held a press conference in front of City Hall attended by members of television, radio and print media.

Kathy Norton, communication contact person for the group said their goal is to collect signatures of 15 percent of the voters living within the city limits to get the measure on a city-wide special election ballot.

"We want it to be a special election," she said. "Strategically, it will work out better if it's a vote on just one issue."

Reader, a community leader, said the group wasn't satisfied with the decision made by the City Council and held a receipt for the \$200 filing fee that the group was

See FLUORIDE, page 3



The group calling itself Citizens for Safe Drinking Water holds a press conference Thursday in Watsonville.

Peter Nichols
Register-Pajaronian

FLUORIDE

From page 1

required to pay in conjunction with the filing.

"They (City officials) need to make sure we followed all the protocols," she said.

City Attorney Alan Smith said it would be his job to write the title and the ballot summary within 15 days. He said he hadn't reviewed the filing and didn't want to speculate on its legality.

"It is my understanding that there are limited circumstances that it could be legally deficient," he said.

City Clerk Lorraine Washington said the process was quite involved and required the group to publish their notice of intent after the City Attorney has returned the title and summary to her. After filing an affidavit of publication, they then would have 180 days to collect signatures.

According to Washington the city would be required to call a special election should the group collect signatures from 15 percent of City voters. If the group reaches the 10 percent threshold the initiative would appear on the ballot of the next regularly scheduled election. The city then would contract with the county to validate the signatures, and if enough are validated the city will refund the group's \$200 filing fee and the fluoride issue will go to the voters.

She added that a recent purge of voters at the County Elections Office actually reduced the number of signatures the group was required to collect.

"I don't think they know it yet, but 10 percent of City voters would

be only 1,194," Washington said. "And 15 percent would be 1,791."

Apparently these initiatives don't come before the electorate often. According to Washington, the last one was a successful mobile home rent control measure that passed in 1989.

"At this point, the group is on target to get this on the 2002 ballot," she said.

A small collection of concerned citizens were among the approximately 20 individuals attending the press conference. Dixie Yager, a Bay Village resident was quick to express her dissatisfaction with the city's decision to fluoridate.

"We have seven people on the City Council, and they determine our lives," she said. "I get very upset, because we should be able to vote on this."

McCain, a filer who described himself as "just a concerned citizen," noted that fluoride hasn't been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The notice of intent suggests ballot text which reads in part, "...it shall be unlawful and a public nuisance for any person, agent or any public or private water system, to add any product, substance, or chemical to the water supply for the purpose of treating or affecting the physical or mental function of a body of any person..."

"We're not attacking fluoride," said Watsonville resident and activist Dan Hernandez. "We're saying it's not prudent to put any medication in the water."

With a direct reference to the nationwide anthrax scare, he said rhetorically, "Should we put Cipro in the water system?"