

SPECIAL DELIVERY

Firefighters help woman in labor
RPLocal, A2



'CATZ BEAT SPARTANS

Canek Gomez leads catz on mound

SPORTS, B1



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Aiding the aging

Nonprofit, elected officials raising awareness for senior nutrition

By BEK PHILLIPS
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

At the Watsonville Senior Center Thursday, Mayor Felipe Hernandez and city council members Lowell Hurst and Rebecca Garcia joined Meals on Wheels to celebrate Champions Week.

Once there, they talked to the crowd, extending to the seniors the invitation to talk about things that matter to them. The city employees served lunch, and issued a proclamation. "The purpose of Community Champions Week is to raise

PVUSD

PV trustees approve, express concern about budget

Student advisory council also approved

By TODD GUILD
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

WATSONVILLE — The Pajaro Valley Unified School District Board of Trustees Wednesday approved a second interim budget report with a positive certification, meaning the district will be able to pay its bills for the next three years.

The board also unanimously approved a plan to add an advisory council of PVUSD high school students, who will participate in board discussions and sit alongside the trustees at their meetings. The Student Advisory Council will start next year.

An overall positive picture, the budget shows a \$38.4 million ending balance this year, a number that jumps to \$40 million next year and reaches \$46 million by the 2018-19 school year.

It also shows the district will stop deficit spending next year.

Despite the rosy outlook, the vote to pass the budget was far

Gloria Betencourt helps arrange sacks of fresh produce Thursday at the Watsonville Senior Center as part of a monthly food giveaway.

Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

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Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Watsonville Mayor Felipe Hernandez (right) joins and city council members Rebecca Garcia (from left) and Lowell Hurst in presenting a proclamation to the director of Meals on Wheels.

MEALS

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awareness for senior nutrition," Program Director Lisa Berkowitz said. "There are thousands of people helping to deliver meals and services with city council members going to Santa Cruz and here in Watsonville."

Meals on Wheels, a national nonprofit, has held annual celebrations during the month of March since 2002, and as part of that, hold Champions Week.

"This is a special year," Berkowitz said. "It is our 40th anniversary, and it is great to see the message of senior nutrition is still in the forefront."

The program invites elected officials, local celebrities and other prominent figures to deliver meals, speak out for seniors

and raise awareness during Champions Week.

"It is noble work that they do," Hernandez said. "It provides food for senior members of the community, and we have to look after our older population."

Meals on Wheels sends about 60,000 meals out to Watsonville annually, with 40,000 of them home delivered. The deliveries help with nutrition and in preventing isolation, Berkowitz said.

"We affect people's lives by improving their nutrition and also giving them the opportunity to get out and meet with friends," she said. "It addresses social isolation, which can be a big problem with seniors."

Hernandez said that the aging population of Watsonville is one that is underrepresented, and the number of people needing

services is growing.

"We have a significant number here in our county," he said. "For me as mayor I want to know what kind of services the community provides and I want to know how we can expand on those."

Both he and Hurst spoke to a group of seniors before lunch telling them to call or meet with them and inform them of the problems they are facing.

"I just want to say how pleased I am to be here today and to let you know you can reach out to me any time with any of your concerns," Hurst said.

For Hernandez, this is just one step in reaching out to them. He is also planning on holding an event addressing scams that go after the elderly.

"It is up to me to go out there and engage them," he said.

RING

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officers arrived around 5 a.m., Loza said.

After the officers spoke with the victim and drove onto Wild Horse Road, they observed a white pickup that matched the description of the victim's stolen truck on the property of 19830 Wild Horse Court. The officers conducted a records check on the license plate but the pick-up was not a match. Further down the driveway they observed a two-tone S-10 pick-up that matched the description of the suspicious pick-up the victim observed while waiting for units to arrive. A records check revealed that the Chevrolet S-10 pick-up was stolen.

Based on the stolen vehicle, the amount of vehicles and vehicle parts located on the property, the officers believed they discovered a vehicle theft ring. MADCAT (Multi Agency Detail for Commercial Auto Theft) and SCARE (Santa Cruz Auto-theft Reduction and Enforcement) are now handling the investigation.

There are more than 30 vehicles on the property and numerous parts, engines and trailers, according to Loza. MADCAT and SCARE resumed their investigation Thursday and expect to work until sunset.

The renters of the property Jesus (Jesse) Perez and Betssi Sandoval have been arrested and booked into the Monterey County Jail on charges of conspiracy to commit auto theft, operating a chop shop, possession

of stolen vehicles, possession of stolen property and possession of burglary tools.

Loza said the Monterey County Sheriff's Office played a vital role in this investigation and with the search on the property.

As of Thursday afternoon the CHP had recovered six stolen vehicles, one stolen trailer and three stolen engines. They also found a large quantity of stolen license plates and miscellaneous parts that cannot be identified or verified stolen because the serial numbers have been ground off, which is also a crime. The vehicles and parts that have been identified will be returned to the owners or their insurance companies.

"The investigation is ongoing and we believe it will lead to an additional arrest," Loza said.

PVUSD

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from unanimous, with Trustees Willie Yahiro and Kim DeSerpa dissenting, and came after less than 30 minutes of board discussion.

The budget discussion was last on an agenda that, while not full, was pushed back by more than a dozen district employees who came to advocate for salary increases.

That required the trustees to extend the meeting time to 10:30 p.m., and by law they can only extend the meeting once.

In addition, the district was required to submit its budget to the Santa Cruz County Office of Education by Mar. 23, which forced them to vote that night, PVUSD Chief Business Officer Melody Canady said.

When Canady had finished presenting the budget to the trustees at 11 p.m., not every trustee had a chance to ask questions.

"I didn't think we had the full discussion," Yahiro said. "I'm happy it's a positive certification, but there were some things that were not explained to people."

Trustee Kim DeSerpa said she was concerned about the long list of repairs that are not being met by Measure L, the \$150 million Bond measure approved by voters in 2012.

She also said the budget as passed does not include teacher salaries or increases to health benefits, an important issue as the district is in negotiations with PVFT and the local California School Employees Association chapter.

"To ask us to push something through without discussion is irresponsible," she said. "We are completely responsible for the fiscal solvency of the district."

DeSerpa also pointed out that trustees cannot under state law discuss district business outside of meetings. She rejected the notion that time constraints should hinder such conversations.

afford to live here with their salaries.

"The problem with reserves is it's money sitting on the shelf, not being used for educating students," he said.

In other action, the trustees unanimously approved a Student Advisory Council, which will include two students from each of the district's high schools. The elected positions will last one year.

While the students will not have voting rights on the board of trustees, and will not sit in on closed-session meetings, they will add an essential component to the board meetings, said Trustee Jeff Ursino.

"This is a chance for students to have their voices heard," he said. "The district needs to continue to be more transparent in what we do everyday. We're trying to continue build a district that is more in tune with the community."

The idea to create the advisory council came from Aptos High School senior Elias Nepa, who in February joined the