

Scotts Valley names first choice for library architect

By J.M. BROWN

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SCOTTS VALLEY -- The City Council unanimously selected an architect Wednesday to draw up plans for the new Scotts Valley library branch and continue leasing the site to a skating rink for several months.

After a hiring committee met with five candidates for seven hours Tuesday, the council voted to receive a bid from Group 4 Architecture, a South San Francisco firm that has worked on libraries in Milpitas, Burlingame and Santa Clara. The council selected Field Paoli of San Francisco as a back up to create a design for the library.

"This is a really good choice," said Mayor Randy Johnson, who said the new library will be a drawing point for the Town Center project. "We're excited because this is the first step in a long journey."

The council also voted to extend a lease with Slawinski Inc. to operate the skating rink at the Scotts Valley Sports Center, which is the site of the new library. The city bought the building July 17 and agreed to lease it back to the skating rink.

The new agreement will extend the lease through Dec. 15 and create \$25,000 in revenue for the city's redevelopment agency. The

arrangement won't affect the timeline for renovation because the work would not start until after December.

Also Wednesday, the council voted unanimously to oppose SB 211, a measure drafted by state Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, who represents portions of the county, to create a ballot measure for establishing a countywide open space commission and a new tax to pay for it.

Proponents from the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County told the council the measure, which is also supported by two local Assembly members, is meant to lay the groundwork for voters to decide whether a commission is necessary. They said lawmakers formed the bill in response to complaints from citizens and organizations who want to preserve more open space, protect the water supply and establish additional park space.

But opponents said the measure would strip cities of local control while taxing property owners during an economic slump. The measure also got a cold reception in Watsonville, where the mayor and agricultural representatives oppose what they see as a land grab that doesn't benefit farming.

"We have so many different layers of government in this county and every county and it usually centers around some sort of land use issues," Councilman Dene Bustichi said. "Here in Scotts Valley, we have quite a bit of open space and we pay for it ourselves. I don't think the citizens of Scotts Valley want to pay for a park in Aptos, Watsonville or Santa Cruz and vice versa."

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