

Council gets petition supporting Scott, Smith

By MIKE COPELAND
Tribune-Herald Staff Writer

A petition in support of Police Chief Larry Scott and City Manager David Smith and signed by 160 of the police department's 170 commissioned officers was presented to the Waco City Council Wednesday.

Officer Wayne Hoskins, who was accompanied by 20 uniformed officers, presented the five-page petition to Mayor Ruben Santos during an afternoon council meeting devoted to the proposed city budget.

During budget hearings, the council voted informally not to raise taxes 3 percent as has been recommended in the 1985-86 budget, but supported a staff proposal for boosting city contributions to the employees' pension instead of raising pay for all employees.

Hoskins, who began to circulate his petition July 23, said he was prompted, in part, by the negative perception of Chief Scott and the Waco Police Department he sees growing in the community.

Neither the petition nor Hoskins mentioned District Attorney Vic Feazell by name, but each implies that the district attorney's office has had a hand in tarnishing the image of the police department.

"It is unfortunate that two individuals like Larry Scott and David Smith have been publicly criticized because they would not let the police department be used for the personal or political gains of certain individuals," a portion

of the petition read.

Hoskins added that "there has not been as much name calling by the city manager and police chief as by the district attorney's office."

There has been conflict among the police department, City Hall and the district attorney's office over the prosecution of drunken-driving cases and the release of information by the city to a Dallas television station that aired a series on Feazell and his prosecution record.

Feazell on May 20 said Smith authorized Scott to investigate him — a claim that Smith and Scott have denied.

Commenting on the petition, Hoskins said, "We're unified by the fact we're being stereotyped as not being on the ball. I don't think we're getting a lot of support in the community. We feel attacks on the chief and city manager are attacks on us.

"We've heard things on the street about morale being low in the police department. Morale is at an all-time high," Hoskins told the council. "We'll continue to serve to the best of our ability, and we ask your continued support of the chief and city manager."

Hoskins, who said seven police officers were on vacation and could not be reached to sign the petition, was thanked by Smith and Santos.

Also Wednesday, the council agreed to approach Downtown Waco Inc., a private group that pushes downtown development, about that group's contracting to make the Austin Avenue Mall two-way, instead of the city doing so.

Downtown Waco Inc. is deeply involved in the project and has obtained financial support for it from most Austin Avenue property owners. The city has agreed to pay one-third of the estimated \$650,000 cost.

Harland Bartholomew & Associates, the engineering firm which is preparing construction plans for Austin Avenue, could "negotiate actively" with a construction firm to keep costs within estimates, said Councilwoman LaNelle McNamara. The city must solicit bids.

The council continued to hear from department heads requesting money for more projects in the 1985-86 city budget. More hearings are planned before a budget is adopted in August or September.

Council members supported a request by Janet Apperson, director of the Waco-McLennan County Health District, that a sanitary inspector be hired to make frequent inspections of area restaurants.

She also recommended that the district be given authority to issue citations to restaurants that fail to comply with health standards. The district now can only close restaurants until they do comply.

The council said it wanted the district to have power to issue citations. Municipal Judge Q.Z. Valentine would set the amount.

During a discussion of the proposed \$1.1 million library budget, Councilman Malcolm Duncan said he would like to see the city libraries turned over to a private group as the city ani-

mal shelter has been. He said the change could mean more contributions and volunteers.

Library director Dorothy Progar didn't agree, and Smith said the library system was operated that way once.

"Yeah, but it didn't have a \$1 million budget," said Duncan.