Longtime Cabrillo College trustee Rebecca Garcia resigns

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APTOS — Longtime Cabrillo trustee Rebecca Garcia stunned the board by announcing that Monday evening's board meeting would be her last, saying only that she “realized on reflection that I can no longer be the best trustee for District 5.”

Garcia, elected in 1992, is the longest-serving member of the board and chaired the city of Watsonville’s recent redistricting after the 2010 census. She said after the meeting that she never intended to serve as long as she did.

“I’ve been 20 years, and it was time for me to step aside and let somebody else move the work forward from a new perspective,” she said. “It was just time.”

The vacancy left by her departure must be filled within 60 days, but Garcia told the board she already has spoken with three Latino community members who told her they plan to apply for the position. Meanwhile, she will continue to serve as a volunteer tutor for first-generation college students, many of whom she said are English-language learners.

Fellow trustees expressed surprise at the announcement, and thanked her for her years of service and tireless advocacy on behalf of the community college.

Brian King, Cabrillo’s president, said after the meeting that he was aware Garcia was weighing whether to seek another term on the board and was “disappointed” in her decision.

In other business, Cabrillo administrators and trustees are keeping an eye on the proposed 2012-13 budget, which was released prematurely last week after a member of the governor’s staff accidentally posted it online.

The budget shows a projected deficit of $9.2 billion. A gap the Brown administration hopes to close partly through cuts to services including Medi-Cal and CalWORKS, and possibly to public school funds. Last month, he announced plans to put a measure on November’s ballot, asking voters to approve a temporary, half-cent sales-tax hike to raise $7 billion in new revenue, with those funds dedicated to education and public safety.

The good news, King said, is that Cabrillo students — at least for now — will not be faced with any new fee increases beyond the hikes already planned for this summer. That’s when course fees will rise 28 percent, from $36 to $46 per unit, because of $102 million in budget cuts to the state’s more than 100 community colleges.

The board also approved a $4,800 grant geared toward introducing Cabrillo students to the teaching profession. Middle and high school math and science teachers will receive a stipend and serve as mentors to Cabrillo students, who will spend several hours in their classrooms each week to get exposure to the teaching profession.