WATSONVILLE

Nonprofit leader chosen for Cabrillo board

Margarita Cortez, the executive director of the Loaves and Fishes food pantry in Watsonville, will join the Cabrillo College Board of Trustees.

The board chose Cortez over veteran educator Pedro Castillo on Tuesday. The seat represents Watsonville and the surrounding area.

The vote was unanimous. Trustee Alan Smith, Watsonville’s city attorney, recused himself.

Castillo, who is chairman of the city Planning Commission and a UC Santa Cruz professor, had the support of Mayor Eduardo Montesino and Councilmen Daniel Dodge and Lowell Hurst.

Cortez was born and raised in Watsonville. She graduated from Watsonville High School in 1991 and earned a bachelor’s degree in political science at UC Santa Barbara. She worked in human resources and as an organizer before taking the helm of Loaves and Fishes just more than a year ago.

She said she understood the importance of education to Watsonville’s young people. Cortez and her four siblings represented the first generation in her family to attend college.

Cortez replaces Rebecca Garcia, who served on Cabrillo’s board for 20 years before resigning in January.