

Bethany OKs moving plans for summer '94

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1-30-93

SCOTTS VALLEY — A year and a half from now, Scotts Valley will lose a good neighbor, one that was around nearly two decades before the city was even born.

The Board of Trustees at Bethany College last week approved plans to move to a new home in Sacramento by the summer of 1994 and agreed to final terms of a deal to turn over its hillside property to developers John and Bruce Nicholson and Barry Swenson, who are proposing to build about 190 homes on the site.

The board unanimously accepted an offer to relocate to a 60-plus acre site owned by Capitol Christian Church, also affiliated with the Assemblies of God denomination. The move still needs final ratification from the church's congregation at a March 3 meeting, but Bethany President Tom Duncan expects little opposition.

"All the word is that they're very excited," Duncan said.

Back in Scotts Valley, the relocation will close the chapter on one era and open the way for a new one.

"The city's always viewed Bethany as good neighbors," said Katherine Caldwell, the senior planner for Scotts Valley. "But we understand the reasons for them moving, and we really look forward to the new development there."

Nestled at the foot of the Santa Cruz Mountains on the north end of the city west of Highway 17, Bethany College was formed in 1950 on a site called Bethany Park that had long served as a church camp. It sits on a 119-acre parcel, only 20 acres of which are developed to serve as the core campus, according to Duncan.

Three years ago, the board of trustees decided to find another home for the college largely because of the high cost of housing in the area.

"We're going to lose a tremendous cultural resource," said Councilman Joe Miller. "We valued Bethany very much as a center for learning and culture."

Duncan sees the move as a positive one for the college as well as for the city.

Bethany's new home will be at Capitol Christian Center, which is located on Highway 50 near Bradshaw Road, about 10 minutes east of downtown Sacramento.

Bethany will share the use of buildings and recreational facilities already occupied by the center, which provides education from the preschool level to high school. But the bulk of Bethany's classrooms and offices will be housed in a new 50,000-square-foot building scheduled to be completed by its 1994 arrival.

The Sacramento site has a baseball field and a football stadium — facilities that were not possible to build in Scotts Valley's steep terrain.

The location in a metropolitan area also expands the job opportunities for students who seek to find positions at hospitals, senior centers or the government.

Most important, students and faculty should be able to find more affordable housing in the Sacramento area, Duncan said.

With the loss of 590 college students, Scotts Valley will lose a valuable labor pool, but on the other hand, it will garner more revenues for its tax base if development of the 190 homes is eventually approved.

"We're not on the tax rolls and the new development would be," Duncan said. "And that would probably be healthy for the city."

Miller said the concept for the 190-home development, which includes housing for low-income families, was well-accepted by council members when it was recently presented to them.