

✓ Paramedic 'base station' ruling delayed

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SANTA CRUZ — The Sentinel incorrectly reported Tuesday that an item on the Board of Supervisors consent agenda concerning the base station designations of hospitals had been passed without comment by supervisors.

In fact, the item had been postponed to Nov. 6.

The Sentinel reporter had heard a vote incorrectly, thinking the board had postponed a vote on a separate matter on hazardous materials.

The reporter regrets the error.

At their next meeting, supervisors will be asked to approve a recommendation by County Health Services Administrator Elinor Hall for two paramedic base station designations with Watsonville Community and Dominican Hospitals.

The suggestion goes on to say that the county should contract with Santa Cruz Community Hospital as lead agency for the community education program for the cardiopulmonary resuscitation program.

Santa Cruz Community Hospital Administrator Jean Adams said that although the hospital will support the county, he wonders if the county has thoroughly examined all the aspects of the advanced life support/paramedic program.

Santa Cruz Community Hospital was not recommended as a base station hospital.

Hall had asked the item be removed from consideration at Tuesday's meeting because, "We're hoping that Community Hospital can meet with the county and Dominican Hospital in the next two weeks and feel better about not being a base station."

Adams wondered why two base stations are being picked in the county, when one would be adequate.

"I question the costs to the community. Are people aware of how much this will cost?" asked Adams.

Richard Swanson, spokesman for the hospital, questioned the need for a paramedic base station at all. "We're not such

a big community that we're experiencing people dying in ambulances."

Hall said in her letter that "from the standpoint of population size, one base station could easily handle all of Santa Cruz County. This would be the most efficient, least costly alternative. However, we recognize that the Pajaro Valley area of South County exists as a separate medical service area from North County. The emergency room staff of Watsonville Community Hospital have already built a close and exclusive working relationship with the staff of A-1 Ambulance."

She cited interviews with Dr. Michael Eliasam of Stanford, Dr. Michael Copass of Seattle and Dr. Ken Kizer of the state Office of Emergency Services as saying one base station is adequate, but that "due to special circumstances one in Watsonville and one in north county could be justified. It was recommended that we avoid three base stations."

Today, Hall said "the critical reason" Dominican has been recommended over Community as the north county-based hospital is that for the past six years Dominican has been working with the Aptos Fire Department paramedic program, and has to date invested some \$300,000 in it.

On the other hand, she said, Santa Cruz Community Hospital has for many years run a community CPR program.

Hall maintained that the designation of base station should not affect the number of patients that go to either hospital.

Adams said the county has given its assurances to him on that matter, and he's satisfied.

Total costs for the first year of operation, including start-up costs, are \$100,848, according to Hall.

The county has been considering a paramedic program for four years. In a public hearing on March 28, the county was criticized by Dr. Kent Benedict for not moving faster.