

Hospital expansion opposed by state agency staffers

A state agency is recommending that Dominican Santa Cruz Hospital be denied a Certificate of Need for a proposed 114-bed addition.

The state Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development will hold a public hearing Monday, Dec. 22, on the hospital's application for the Certificate of Need required before the hospital can receive any federal or state reimbursement for services provided in the new facility.

The hearing will be held at 10 a.m. in the county's Emeline Street complex.

Dominican won approval from the Mid-Coast Health Systems Agency board for the certificate after the HSA staff opposed it.

The hospital is proposing construction of a 59,100-square-foot addition that would include 47 medical-surgical beds, four intensive care and four coronary care beds, six pediatric beds and 53 skilled nursing beds.

The hospital would also add two surgical operating rooms, one radiology room and expand the space allocated to the physical occupational, speech and respiratory therapy services, clinical laboratory,

dining room and storage area.

Total construction cost is \$14,057,000.

The state Office's Division of Certificate of Need, in a staff report, said it will recommend denial of the total application.

It cites many of the same objections used by the HSA staff and Community Hospital of Santa Cruz representatives in opposing the certificate application.

It said Dominican wants to build 47 new medical-surgical beds while the Statewide Health and Facilities Plan adopted in 1980 records an excess of 94 beds in the Santa Cruz area.

The state agency added that while Dominican is asking for six new pediatric beds and there is a need for 12 beds, the hospital had nine designated pediatric beds reclassified to medical surgical beds on Dec. 1, 1979, and has made no attempt to redignate existing beds into the pediatric category.

It also pointed out that the hospital is asking for an additional eight ICU/CCU beds while the state plan shows a need for only four additional beds in the Santa Cruz area.

The state also points out that Community Hospital is operating at approximately 35 percent of its capacity

and repeats Community's claim that Dominican's expansion will adversely affect growth of Community.

It also mentions that local convalescent hospitals had told the HSA that there are enough beds for Skilled Nursing Facility patients in the area, and that new beds will cause a lower utilization rate in the community, impacting them economically.

"There is insufficient demonstration of patient 'waiting' days or out of area treatment to warrant the addition of new beds," the staff said.

The staff report also points out that Dominican "has not shown how the project will maximize the utilization of available beds at both Community Hospital and Dominican Hospital."

It adds: "The applicant proposes to expend \$14 million to expand its own services while the capability to provide those services already exists in the community."

It also criticizes the design of the addition,

saying the skilled nursing facility is "a more costly structure . . . than normally used for that service."

"The architectural design of the building to be added will be more costly than one constructed with straight exterior walls instead of the 'saw tooth' design proposed."

Following release of the state report, Dominican Hospital spokesman Frank McGovern issued a statement, contending the hospital's expansion "is the only substantive solution to the pressing health care needs facing the people of Santa Cruz now and in the future."

"The people of Santa Cruz recognized the importance of the project as evidenced by their overwhelming support at the recent public meetings."

"Mid Coast Health Systems Agency in its unanimous approval also recognized its importance in ensuring adequate health care facilities for the future."

"Further, the county's endorsement of the project speaks of their belief in the need for the expansion. We believe that the state cannot ignore the documented needs the, total project addresses."