

Local news

Agreement reached on use of Zayante firehouse

By DONNA KIMURA

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ZAYANTE — Leaders of the Zayante fire department are feeling better a week after their fire station was slapped with a notice that it was in violation of Santa Cruz County codes.

They met Tuesday morning to iron out their differences with officials from the county Planning Department who surprised them with the controversial "red tag."

"It was a very positive meeting," said Kris Crow, chairwoman of the fire board. "I feel we got a lot done in a short period of time."

The two sides reached an agreement on several key points that resulted in the volunteer fire department agreeing to the conditions for a new use permit, according to Crow.

The department will be completing work

on the station's kitchen hood so it can receive a required final clearance on an old building permit.

The fire department has been using the station since about 1989, but the kitchen and a second story are incomplete and do not meet county standards. As a result, the building permit has not received final approval.

Zayante fire officials said they had been working to resolve this and other issues when they were red-tagged. The notice limited use of the station, but did not disrupt emergency services.

Plans for the kitchen work had been turned into the planning department before the station received its notice of violation. The second story will only be used for storage.

Crow hopes to have the matter resolved in about 30 days.

Until the building permit is finalized,

Community meetings, however, are on hold until the building permit is signed.

the fire station will only be used for department business. That means firefighters will continue to respond to emergencies. They will also be allowed to conduct drills, and the fire board will hold its regular meetings there.

Community meetings, however, are on hold until the building permit is signed. More than just a firehouse, it is a vital community center for Zayante.

Some have called it the heart of the community.

Fortunately, no community meetings are scheduled at this time so there will be no inconvenience to groups, according to

Crow.

The meeting rooms will be open to the community by the time school resumes and groups like the 4-H, Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts start gathering again, she said.

Once the building permit is straightened out, a new use permit goes into effect, said Crow.

The permit settles several other differences with county planners, who say they are treating the fire department just like any other property owner.

Under the new agreement, the fire department will not have to pave the park-

ing lot, which was estimated to cost the volunteer agency as much as \$100,000.

The station, however, can only host nine special events a year between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. It was scaled back from 12 large events.

"We still have the freedom to make decisions when there is a need," Crow said.

Only about four major events have been held at the station, but being allowed nine gives the department the flexibility to help groups that may need the station.

For example, if a family has an emergency, the community can still use the grounds for a big fund-raising event, Crow said.

"It's nice to be able to do what we do best," she said. "We serve the members of our community."