

# New-hospital funds officially approved

It's now official. Watsonville Community Hospital has received a signed document indicating that FEMA will give the hospital \$48.9 million to construct a new building, which will most likely be located somewhere in the Pajaro Valley.

Earlier this year, the hospital indicated that FEMA was urging it to consider building on one of two sites it already owns: one behind Seaciff Inn in Aptos, and one adjacent to the current building. A preliminary evaluation made by a consulting group retained by the hospital has said the new building should be in the Pajaro Valley.

The current building, although

pronounced safe, was damaged in the earthquake. When it became clear that repairing damages would be close to the cost of constructing a new building, FEMA and the hospital decided that would make the most sense.

The cost of the construction has been estimated at \$42.1 million. Approximately \$6.8 million has been granted to cover inflationary costs, estimated at 5 percent a year.

As part of the evaluation process being carried out by the consulting firm, a "community forum" on health-care needs will be held Monday from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Watsonville Senior Center.

—Chela Zabin