

Aptos area faced with \$1 million fire budget

By BOB SMITH

Aptos firemen plan to spend nearly \$1 million in this fiscal year but Tuesday night the district board of directors couldn't muster a quorum to approve the budget and set a tax rate.

Directors Richard Duchscher and Joe Lynch waited for nearly 30 minutes Tuesday night before Duchscher ordered the meeting adjourned.

They'll try again for a legal quorum today, noon, at the home of director Walter Jordan, 7444 Mesa Drive, Aptos.

Jordan is recovering from hip surgery and was unable to come to the fire station Tuesday for the meeting.

The other directors — Don Eddleman and Stuart Davis — were out of town. Davis had reportedly gone to San Francisco airport and Eddleman was vacationing in Reno.

Fire chief Richard Chinn is proposing a total budget of \$987,717 for this year, with

\$812,217 to be raised from local taxes.

Last year, the district raised \$717,189 from local taxes, Chinn said.

If the board approves the proposal, the district will have a 98 cent \$100 assessed valuation tax rate — a six cent drop from last year's \$1.04.

Although a simple majority — three of the five directors — is needed for budget approval, the district is applying for an \$86,000 loan from County Bank to pay for a new fire truck.

Loan application approvals require a four-fifths vote of the full board, necessitating the attendance of at least four directors.

Besides the bank loan, Chinn forecasts a \$46,600 carryover from the last fiscal year, \$23,000 from the sale of a small utility pumper, and \$8,500 in weed abatement income.

The district will be paying out \$600,227 in salaries and fringe benefits this year. That includes

a \$3,024 payment beginning Jan. 1, 1978 to the state unemployment insurance fund.

The district will pay \$50,480 into the new Santa Cruz County fire agency workmen's compensation fund, covering the activities of its uniformed firemen. It will add \$47 to the bill to cover its one "civilian" employe — secretary Sharon Chappelle. The district, together with other fire districts in the county, pulled out of the state fund earlier this year in response to the continually soaring insurance rates for firemen. The districts are now paying approximately the same as they were under the state program, but anticipate a savings in future years after a reserve fund is built up.

The district plans to spend a total of \$126,833 this year for new equipment. The largest item is \$86,500 for a new fire engine, now scheduled for delivery in September.

Asst. chief Nick Baumgartner will be getting a new compact car — costing \$5,000.

The district will also be spending \$25,342 to buy and outfit a van for its paramedic program.

Three firemen are now in Los Angeles, completing their field training with Los Angeles city paramedics. The county's Emergency Medical Care Commission endorsed a proposal by the department to establish a pilot program in the district this fall. The final hurdle will be approved by the county board of supervisors of a contract with Dominican Hospital, authorizing it to act as the "base hospital" under the program.

Chinn said the contract will not commit the county to any additional cost, but is required under the state's enabling legislation.

Final certification of the paramedics and approval of the program will be given by acting county health officer Dr. Joseph Craig after the paramedics pass an oral exam by the county's emergency room physicians, and a written test administered by Stanford University Medical Center.