

Capitola agrees to fund child-care study

CAPITOLA — Council members here concede \$87,000 will pay for a lot of child care, but they still agreed Thursday night to contribute the city's share toward a study aimed at aiding child-care programs countywide.

On a 3-2 vote, with Councilwoman Stephanie Harlan leading the way along with Mayor Michael Routh and Councilman Jerry Clarke, the council approved the requested \$4,000 city share toward the study. Councilmen Dennis Beltram and Bob Bucher voted against.

Bucher complained that the seven-month, \$87,000 study "is not going to make the (child-care) problem go away." He pointed out that the Santa Cruz County Child Care Council's budget had \$600 earmarked for "hospitality" for the local office.

Instead, Bucher said, the \$4,000 would be better spent if the city gave it directly to Capitola After-School Day Care, which serves city resi-

dents. However, Harlan argued, such a payment would do nothing to solve the overall problem of child care in the county.

Routh said the study has the potential to reduce government funding for child-care programs. He also expects the Child Care Council to eventually act as a "clearing house" for child-care facilities in the county — much the same way the Cultural Council acts for music and art programs in the county.

According to Jane Follansbee, the Child Care Council's director and long-range planning coordinator, the study would culminate in a "Child Development Action Plan." Such a plan would catalog existing child-care programs and look at ways to strengthen them. It is hoped to not only improve programs, but also to make them more affordable. New funding sources could be developed from the study.

Santa Cruz County has 90 child-care centers

and 300 licensed homes serving approximately 10,000 children. Yet, one parent told the council, her child has been on a waiting list for three years.

The Child Care Council is proposing to pay a New York consulting firm \$65,300 in fees and expenses for the study. Another \$17,800 would go to Follansbee. The remaining \$4,000 would be spent for local office expenses.

So far, the Child Care Council is halfway toward its \$87,000 goal. According to Follansbee, the city of Santa Cruz has already contributed \$15,000 and the county \$8,000.

County supervisors Tuesday — despite a warning by County Administrative Officer George Newell that their financial cupboard is nearly bare — directed staff to return Jan. 14 with a recommendation for more assistance. The Child Care Council is requesting another \$25,000 from the county.