

Historic church offered to Capitola

Caution urged in accepting St. John's building

By **CHUCK ANDERSON**
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CAPITOLA — Historic St. John's Episcopal Church, looking to move to Aptos, wants to donate its quaint, century-old shingle-clad building to the city. City Council members, though, have decidedly mixed views about the idea.

The idea is "very exciting," Mayor Stephanie Harlan said at Thursday night's council meeting. But Councilman Tony Gualtieri cautioned, "I don't want this to be another Rispin," referring to the

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TONY GUALTIERI,
CITY COUNCILMAN

long-delayed rehabilitation of the city-owned mansion on Wharf Road.

The church and council members Bruce Arthur and Gayle Ortiz have talked informally about moving the Depot Hill building to a city-owned site so the church can sell the property. The

church made a formal proposal to the council Thursday night.

Capitola's first church "was built in 1898 to serve Camp Capitola and has great architectural and historic significance," noted Chris Cottle, a church member, former district attorney and retired appellate court judge. "We are interested in preserving it as a resource for the city."

The building could be moved to Noble Gulch at Monterey and Bay avenues, Arthur told the council.

"It's an ideal location," Cottle

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said. "It could be used for small performances, exhibits and meetings." He said the congregation's move to a new church planned in the Seacliff area is two or more years away.

Accepting the building is "a laudable idea," Gualtieri said, "but we have to look at possible uses, whether the city needs it and the cost of maintaining it. I just want to insert a word of caution here."

Councilman Dennis Norton insisted that no city money be spent on the project.

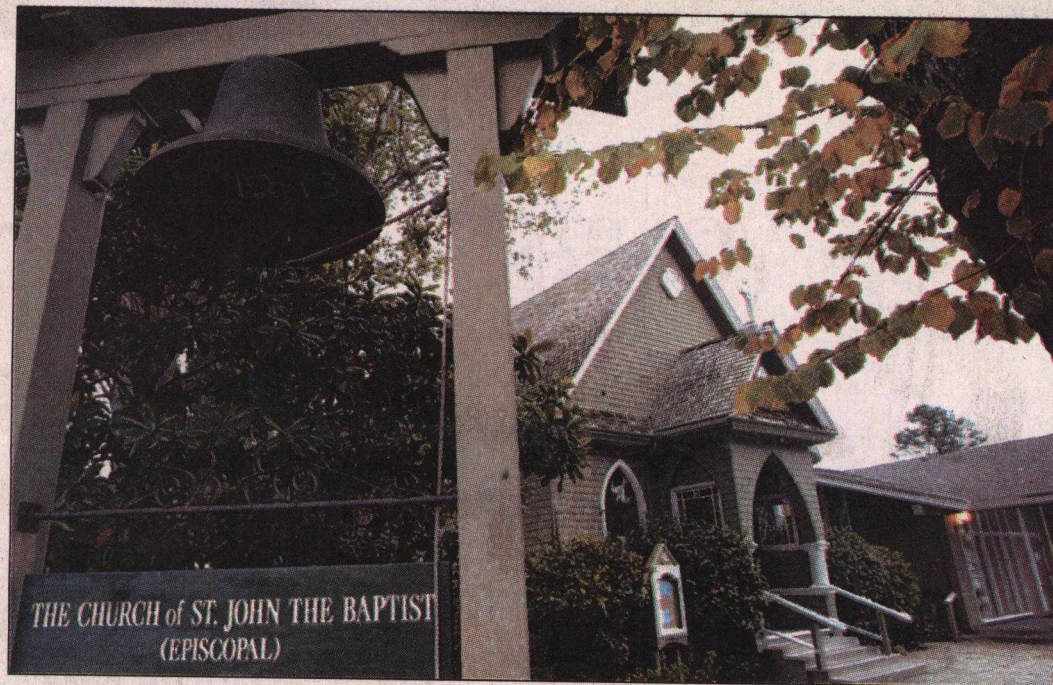
"If you want this to be real, it should be done by the private sector with city cooperation," he said. "That's how we built the Jade Street Community Center — with volunteers."

There is no plan to spend city funds, Arthur responded.

Gualtieri said he thought that once the church is moved, it would lose its historic status.

But moving it within the same vicinity might not jeopardize its historic significance, said Kathleen Molloy, city community development director, "because it was a church that served summer visitors from all over, not just Depot Hill residents."

Ortiz proposed having city staff members join the informal talks about the project's feasibility and "brainstorm possible uses and sources of grant money." City Manager Rich Hill agreed to send



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Capitola is looking into whether it could take the historic church building and move it.

the staff.

"We look forward to working with you," Harlan said. "This is an important part of the history of Capitola."

The church has been considering a move for 15

years. It has tried unsuccessfully to sell the building to another church, a convent or a developer.

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