

✓ CF AROMAS RP 4/17/89

Aromas secession move dealt setback

By KATHARINE BALL
STAFF WRITER

No final decision has been reached by state authorities, but Pajaro Valley schools Superintendent Jim Baker said he believes the bid to sever Aromas Elementary School from his district is dead.

Aromas parents who want to join the San Juan Elementary School District, however, say they will fight on to remove their school from the Pajaro Valley district.

The state Board of Education listened to arguments on the matter in Sacramento Thursday and Friday last week, then voted 5-1 to deny Aromas permission to switch districts, Baker said.

But the state board, which currently has only the six appointees, is supposed to have 11 members. So the five members who voted against allowing Aromas to switch cannot be counted as a majority, Baker said.

Baker said he felt confident that Aromas would never get permission to switch, however, even from a full board.

He said Bill Honig, state superintendent of public instruction, had told Aromas parents it would be "very difficult" to overrule the five votes already cast against them.

But Paul Stampleman, one of the Aromas parents leading the drive to leave the Pajaro Valley district, said his group would continue to press for the district switch.

"The state board has not decided," Stampleman said this morning. He said his group would wait for the governor to appoint another five members to the state board of education and try again.

The Aromas parents say they do not get enough attention from the Pajaro Valley district administration, and that their children

would be better served if Aromas School belonged to the smaller San Juan district.

But Baker, on behalf of the Pajaro Valley district, argued that removing the white students who attend Aromas from the district would increase the racial isolation of Hispanic students at Pajaro Middle School and Watsonville High School.

Baker said he was both surprised and pleased by the number of state board members who accepted his arguments, because the state Department of Education staff report had recommended allowing Aromas to switch.

Baker said Roland Baker, principal of Aromas School (and no relation to the superintendent), Betty Peck, an Aromas teacher, and Fonda Petty, an instructional aide at the school, had also argued in Sacramento against allowing Aromas to switch districts.