

Navy ship to visit Capitola on Fourth of July

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The U.S. Navy is coming to Capitola for the Fourth of July. The Navy has accepted the city's invitation and the USS Francis Hammond will visit July 2 to 5, Capitola Mayor Jerry Clarke announced at a press conference yesterday. The ship is a 438-foot-long fast frigate. Its home port is Long Beach, but it is now on maneuvers somewhere in the Pacific, Clarke said. It will be only the second time

in Capitola's history that a Navy ship has anchored off Capitola Beach. The first time was 81 years ago, when the USS Oregon visited in 1908; Clarke said Capitola resident and museum curator Lew Deasy had located a postcard commemorating that visit. Clarke said everyone in the county would be invited to help Capitola welcome the Navy. He said he's formed a steering committee of Capitola residents and prominent people from

throughout the county to help plan the visits. "This is not a closed Capitola event," he said. The logistics of the visit, including how to handle traffic in Capitola Village, have yet to be worked out, he said. "Right now, we're just excited," said Clarke, a Navy veteran. He credited U.S. Congressman Leon Panetta with getting the Navy to accept Capitola's offer. Meanwhile, Doug Rand, of the Resource Center for Nonviolence,

and Dan Miller, an Aptos resident who described himself as an activist, retired marine biologist and veteran, said after the press conference they were opposed to the Navy ship's visit to Capitola. Rand said demonstrations may be staged in Capitola during the ship's visit, but he was not sure Capitola would be as obliging to demonstrators as Santa Cruz has been during the Navy visits there. "I'm not quite sure if we're going to have the same First

Amendment rights here in Capitola," he said. Rand particularly objected to the fact Capitola had invited the Navy without a public hearing. He also said Navy visits were made for recruitment purposes and to promote the whole idea of nuclear and conventional weapons. Clarke said he did not know, or care, if the Francis Hammond would be carrying nuclear weapons. "Oh, for Pete's sake," Mayor

Murphy responded, when asked about Rand's and Miller's comments. "I don't think it's a show of militarism at all. I just think it's honoring people who have served their country." The issue of a Navy ship visit to Santa Cruz County has been a controversial one since the Santa Cruz City Council's progressive majority voted in January not to invite a ship. A number of people had protested during a public

hearing that inviting the Navy would promote militarism and war. Santa Cruz's actions upset many veterans, including Clarke, who suggested at a Capitola City Council meeting two days later that Capitola invite the Navy in Santa Cruz's stead. While the council did not actually take a vote on his suggestion, Clarke said the decision was unanimous. Councilwoman Stephanie Harlan raised the only objection, calling for a public hearing, but went along with the decision, Clarke said. Asked by a reporter to respond to comments that Capitola's invitation was "a slap in the face" to Santa Cruz, Clarke summed up the differences between the two cities by referring to Capitola's flourishing economy. "Capitola over the years has been the benefactor of opportunity," he said, adding that the city was 98 percent built out by both residential and business standards. "That's a result of us providing the opportunity for business," he said, "and the climate for business ... The same thing's happened with the ship."

He admitted he was angered when Santa Cruz voted against inviting the Navy, because it should have been a county decision, he said. However, Capitola has talked from time to time of inviting the Navy to return to Capitola and Santa Cruz finally provided the impetus, he said. Support has been 20-1 among people he's heard from since the council's decision, he said. Scotts Valley Mayor Glennon Culwell has been a strong advocate of the Navy visit and Watsonville movers and shakers have also thrown their support to Capitola. "I think it's great," Watsonville Mayor Murphy said of the Navy visit. "I just got the news in a telephone call when I got back from lunch. I'm very happy about it." Clarke said a separate event, a "Call to Assemble" planned by Santa Cruz County veterans on Memorial weekend at Capitola's Jade Street Park, to honor living and dead veterans, would also welcome participation from around the county. Murphy said Watsonville would definitely be represented at the Call to Assemble as well as during the Navy ship's visit.

REFERENCE

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April 22, 1989