

Bonny Doon Drug Center Proposal Catches Some County Officials By Surprise, Too

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Bonny Doon residents weren't the only ones surprised by a proposal for an alcoholic and drug addiction treatment center in their area.

County supervisors, the superintendent of schools, and other county officials also said today they were unaware the project was nearing a final stage.

Arthur Hempel, director of the program for the county's Community Mental Health Services, nevertheless claimed numerous agencies were kept abreast of the program's progress.

Hempel told the Bonny Doon school board and a small audience Wednesday night that a 50-to-75-bed facility might be set up at the Western Hills Ranch Club on Pine Flat Road.

It has not gotten final county approval as yet.

News of the program caused a sensation among local resi-

dents, many of whom felt the project had been cloaked in secrecy and sprung suddenly at the meeting without warning. The project was brought up under "oral communications" on the agenda.

The program, to be financed 90 per cent by state funds and 10 per cent county funds, would set up a Synanon-type treatment center on the former recreation club grounds.

Hempel said it would supplement, not replace, the Rev. Gene Dawson's Drug Abuse Prevention Center at General Hospital and a current Alcoholics Anonymous-type program at Star Lodge in Scotts Valley.

"There are different types of persons involved. The present programs are privately-run and operated on a religious or AA basis," he explained.

He said the cost of the treatment program per person would be little more than cost of jail-

ing addicts or alcoholics, or about \$7 to \$10 per day.

Work on the program has been going on for more than three months, and Hempel said he has worked closely with county supervisors on its formation.

He said the County Board of Education, County Administrative Office, the sheriff, the Social Welfare department, Juvenile Probation department and Public Health department have all been informed of the program's progress.

However, Seaside Supervisor Russ McCallie said today he learned only Tuesday of the Bonny Doon site plan. Supervisor Dan Forbus and George Cress were apparently told Monday. Supervisor Ralph Sanson said he had no knowledge whatsoever of the plan.

"We only heard about the availability of this property after Christmas, and that's why

things seem to be moving so fast," Hempel said.

McCallie told Hempel to set up a meeting and inform Bonny Doon residents by contacting Superintendent of Schools Dr. Richard Fickel and Bonny Doon school principal and administrator Howard Hazeltine.

Hazeltine and Fickel confirmed this today. "I tried to contact several persons and let them know the presentation was coming up, but it was the first I had heard of it," Hazeltine declared.

Fickel also said he had no prior knowledge of the Bonny Doon plan, but had been contacted about a classroom teaching program as part of the rehabilitation plan.

All the supervisors contacted, except Forbus, said they did not know any site was planned in Bonny Doon or even that site selection was imminent.

Forbus admitted it was unusual to present such a program

to the public before it was approved by the board. But he said neither he nor the County Administrative Office were fully aware of its progress.

McCallie said today he will be at Tuesday's meeting of the Bonny Doon Parent Club to talk about the proposal. "We have not approved this program, and I believe it may be necessary to have county use permit hearings before it would be allowed in that area," he said.

Hempel said he hopes to have the rehabilitation center in operation before the end of April. He said between 12 and 15 possible sites in the county were investigated before the Bonny Doon site was found.

An official press release from the CAO's office today, signed by Forbus and McCallie, called the initial Bonny Doon meeting "premature and unauthorized," and assured that "no action will be taken without full public participation."