

Supervisors set hearing on hospital license

By BUD O'BRIEN

A public hearing will be held Feb. 19 on the proposal that Santa Cruz County surrender its hospital license, paving the way for Dominican Hospital to acquire the 47 medical-surgical beds that are allocated to the county with its license.

The board of supervisors set the public hearing date this morning after hearing details of the tentative agreement drawn up by county and Dominican Hospital officials.

In a nutshell, the agreement, if finally approved, would result in Dominican undertaking a \$9 million expansion program, adding a total of 114 new beds; the county, for surrendering its license, would receive a number of financial concessions from the hospital in the treatment of indigent patients for which the county is liable under the law.

Sister Josephine Sullivan, administrator for the hospital, told the board this morning that the agreement was mutually beneficial to the hospital and the county.

But Harold Sundean, a Santa Cruz entrepreneur who built Community Hospital in

Santa Cruz and recently sold it to a Los Angeles based company, told the supervisors the deal wasn't as good as it looked.

(Community Hospital had originally been invited to participate with Dominican and the county in negotiating the allocation of beds. Like the county, whose 47 beds are on paper only, Community is allocated under its license more beds than it actually uses. Dominican frequently is filled to capacity.)

Sundean told the board it ought to beware of the so-called financial benefits that it would accrue under the agreement. He said, for example, Dominican's promise to absorb a certain amount of the cost of treating indigent patients had little meaning because most of the bills wouldn't be collected.

He also implied that certain elements in the medical profession had conspired to have the county close its hospital in 1973 and that the same elements were behind the current negotiations that would result in the county finally surrendering its license.

He strongly advised the board to hang on to the license because the county may find it necessary in the future to go back in the hospital business. Sundean said that in his opinion private hospitals should rise or fall on their own initiative.

"It's (a hospital) a very profitable operation," he said. "Don't think it isn't."

However, Supervisor Dan Forbus spoke favorably of the agreement, saying it would provide better medical care for all the county.

Victim identified

The body of a woman washed up Monday morning on the beach near Capitola has been identified as that of Anna Rodriguez, 22, of Santa Cruz, a coroner's spokesman said.

Miss Rodriguez disappeared Sunday after a boat in which she and three other persons were riding capsized and broke up in the surf outside the mouth of the Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor. The other three swam to shore.

Investigation of another drowning death in the harbor itself on Friday is continuing. Santa Cruz police said today the death of Mary Abby Steven, 35, of 1156 Chanticleer Ave., Live Oak, is believed to have been either a suicide or an accident.

The woman had been a voluntary patient at a mental care hospital but had checked out of the hospital the day before her death. Police said she had returned briefly to the hospital Friday morning and had appeared "despondent." Her body was found two hours later in the harbor waters.

Bond sale okayed

The sale of \$2 million worth of revenue bonds to finance

Midcounty Center