

ments, it is expected to approve the censuring.

couple of hours or drag on into the evening.

Crowded Juvenile Hall Situation 'Explosive'

By Wallace Wood
Sentinel Staff Writer

Juvenile hall is bursting at the seams.

So "very explosive" is the overcrowding at the outdated hall on County General hospital grounds that some youthful offenders will have to be released, even though it's likely they will get into trouble again.

This was the warning of Probation Officer James Solomon yesterday following notification by Monterey county it cannot board local youngsters there any more. Solomon stated his case in a report to the board of supervisors.

Delinquents in for a fairly long stay at the Santa Cruz hall before their cases come to court are sent to Monterey on crowded weekends. But Monterey officials now say their hall is usually full, too.

Juvenile officers cite a growing use of drugs and alcohol among youths in this county as the basic difficulty.

A rapid increase in the number of youngsters arrested and taken to juvenile hall here has caused the current crisis. Police agencies are cracking down harder than ever, particularly on drug use.

Soloman said from 20 to 25 teenagers and even pre-teens are "housed" at the hall on an average day. The hall was designed to hold 10 children.

On peak days, 40 or 50 persons may stay there temporarily.

The only solution, in the

words of Solomon, is to take a "liberal attitude toward the detention of local children." This means releasing them.

He adds that, "no doubt, by doing this, some mistakes will be made and there is a strong possibility that some children released will become involved in other difficulties in the community."

Santa Cruz county already keeps youngsters less time in its hall than most counties. Average stay last year was 4.3 days.

The situation, Solomon concludes, is "extremely serious" and "very explosive."

Why can't a new juvenile hall be built? As Supervisor Russ McCallie pointed out yesterday, it can. But it will take at least a year. Plans should be complete by the end of March and construction could begin by June.

Voters approved a \$500,000 bond issue for a new hall in April of 1964. A series of architect's troubles and trouble finding a hall location resulted in long delays.

A spot was finally picked on a 10-acre section of 38 acres off Graham Hill road north of the Pasatiempo Pines subdivision, over the vigorous objections of residents.

Architect Warren Wong's plans were scrapped, and the firm of Higgins and Root of San Jose have been drawing up new ones.

Worse yet, the \$500,000 cost ceiling has had to be extended

to \$750,000 because of an enlargement to house the juvenile probation staff on the site. This did not include the cost of buying the 38 acres.

Since the county is somewhat short of money this year, it all makes for a near-impossible situation, even though county officials say they have enough money to begin construction.

And youngsters can't be shipped to counties other than Monterey for the same reason: facilities are full.

Supervisors referred the matter to their administrative officer. It was clear they had no solutions, but that they want some time to think.

If the county wants to avoid a growing seriousness of the juvenile delinquent problem, they may have to think fast and act fast, the probation officer's report indicates.

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