

Hospital's Future in doubt *Hospitals - Dominican Hospital*

Dominican Purchases

AMI/Community Hospital

by Bob Johnson

The recent sale of AMI-Community Hospital to Dominican Hospital of Santa Cruz has many people in the senior activist community privately anxious about the loss of choice that will come with only one hospital serving all of north Santa Cruz County.

And the entire community

is wondering what Dominican will do with its newly acquired Frederick Street facility when the dust settles from the deal.

"As I understand it there will be two campuses, with Dominican remaining an acute care hospital and Community having the drug and alcohol abuse center and the restorative care unit," said Lenore Wilkerson, a member of the local

Seniors Council Board of Directors.

Wilkerson, who also serves as manager of the Companion for Life program and as a volunteer for the Medicare Advocacy Program, was among the local seniors invited to a meeting with top Dominican staff to discuss the hospital acquisition last month.

Dominican's top administrator Sister Julie Hyer confirmed to THE NEWS that convalescent, rehabilitation, and other less acute care is the most likely future for Community.

"Those were the kinds of things we had in mind for a two campus hospital," said Hyer. "Now we have to evaluate the facility and available services to see if that program would work."

Hyer estimated that the evaluation will take a month, after which the community will be given more definition information about Community.

Virtually everyone was sorry to see Community go under, with the possible exception of former competitor Dominican.

"Community provided us a very valid hospital service," said Wilkerson. "Unfortunately our community wasn't really large enough to cover two hospitals."

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During the interim review period, according to Hyer, representatives from numerous local agencies serving seniors will again be consulted.

That is an arrangement that will hopefully continue long after this brief period during which Dominican is unusually subject to public suspicion.

"I am very much in favor of the seniors having a voice," said Seniors Council President Carlos Lopez. "We have a health committee on the Seniors Council

and we do need the voice of the seniors at the hospital."

While consultation with seniors may calm some nerves, Wilkerson is among the growing number of advocates who believe a fundamental remaking of our health care system is needed if the elderly are to have adequate care.

"The bottom line is we need national health care," said Wilkerson. "Today's seniors are already in a deep hole- we need national health care for tomorrow's seniors."

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