

Aptos-LSB clarifies emergency service fee

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APTOS — A new fee that charges for emergency services provided by the Aptos-La Selva Beach Fire District has been changed to cover only those calls caused by illegal activity.

The Fire Board, during a special meeting Thursday, clarified its so-called "cost-recovery" ordinance. As originally adopted, the ordinance would have allowed the district to recover costs for services provided to visitors passing

through the Mid-County fire district area. Services where fees could be charged ranged from medical aids involving vehicle accidents to putting out car fires.

The Fire Board clarified the ordinance to pertain to calls caused by some type of illegal activity, such as fires or accidents caused by alcohol or drug-related violations. Also, covered are illegal burns, hazardous material spills and accidents caused by negligence.

Fire Chief Chuck Mornard said the changes didn't come as a result

of complaints from the public. "We didn't get any complaints," he said. "Philosophically, we just decided to limit what we should charge for. We looked at public relations vs. revenues."

However, at the same time, Mornard warned that the Fire Board could be forced to adopt a wider-reaching fee-collection policy should finances get tighter. As it is, the ordinance was adopted as a budget-balancing measure after the fire district received a \$58,700 bill from the county for property

tax collection. Directors felt a cost-recovery fee would be better than raising taxes to residents in the district, said Fire Board President Don Griffin.

Mornard added that the first batch of around 25 bills will be mailed next week.