

Emergency shelter faces public scrutiny

2-27-86
SANTA CRUZ — A permit request by the New Life Center on Fair Avenue to run a 25-bed emergency shelter will be considered tonight by the Zoning Board.

Board members will hold a public hearing on the request at a meeting beginning at 7 at the council chamber at City Hall.

Since 1972, New Life Center has been operating a shelter, drug- and alcohol-counseling program and Bible study sessions at the site.

To approve the permit, board members would have to decide the shelter would be compatible with the neighborhood.

Planning Department staff members say they have received no recent complaints about the center's operations, but residents are expected to attend tonight's hearing to

oppose approval of the permit.

Staff members are recommending the permit be tied to several conditions, including a six-month review, a 45-consecutive-day maximum stay for guests, no sleeping outside on the premises, a minimum of two staff members for supervision and operating hours from 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 a.m., with the shelter to be closed from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Overflow guests are "to be escorted out of the neighborhood, provided bus fare or transported by center vehicles to other shelters," according to a staff report.

Guests are subject to breathalyzer tests to detect alcohol use, says the report.

Attendance at Bible study sessions would be optional.

Staff members say the center does

not propose a "crash pad," but a "homelike environment" to give homeless persons a base to look for

work or permanent housing.

First priority would be given to women and children.