

Supervisors fume over treatment of drug use prevention program

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Charges that a county-sponsored proposal to establish a drug misuse prevention program got shot down by two high ranking county employees were leveled Tuesday morning by Santa Cruz County supervisors.

At issue during the lengthy discussion was the county health department's application for a grant to run the program, which would be administered under contract by the Do It Now Foundation. The grant application for federal funds had been submitted to the regional council of the California Council on Criminal Justice (CCCJ).

Accused by the supervisors of selling the proposal down the river were Sheriff Doug James and Chief Probation Officer James Solomon.

The county-sponsored program was originally approved by the CCCJ regional council and sent to its planning and operations committee for minor amendments. But that committee last week voted against the entire program.

Sheriff James, Solomon and Watsonville Police Chief Jim Cunningham are members of the planning and operations committee. Cunningham voted in favor of the county-backed program at the meeting, but Sheriff James voted against it and Solomon abstained from voting after raising several objections.

Cunningham, Solomon and James were invited to appear before supervisors Tuesday morning to discuss the matter. Cunningham and Solomon appeared and spoke but James failed to appear.

Solomon was raked over the coals by Supervisor Dan

Forbus, who charged that the chief probation officer and the sheriff had "shot our program down" at last week's planning and operations committee meeting.

"You can't expect people from other counties to back our program when our own people shoot it down," Forbus said angrily.

Solomon said he had raised certain questions about the program and the Do It Now Foundation at last week's meeting. But he denied "shooting it down."

"Did you bother trying to get those questions answered here in the county before going to that meeting?" Forbus asked, angrily. "Did you come into the board of supervisors and mention your reservations to us? You did not."

Solomon said he had questions about Do It Now Foundation's Los Angeles program. He said no local information was available about that program.

Not so, Ron Lang, county drug abuse coordinator said. Lang said several Santa Cruz County representatives visited Los Angeles and studied the Do It Now program there.

Chairman Ralph Sanson asked Lang why the matter was discussed by the CCCJ planning and operations committee last week even though Lang had been told by CCCJ staff that the matter would not be brought up.

Lang responded that he did not know why but said, "I don't believe anything I hear from anyone anymore."

Sanson and Supervisor Phil Harry said it seemed the CCCJ staff was ignoring Santa Cruz County's proposal while funding

proposals from other counties.

Forbus defended the CCCJ staff and said that the real responsibility lies with Santa Cruz County, which has not applied for any CCCJ grant during the past three years. He said the Do It Now grant request was the first submitted by the county.

Board members agreed with Cunningham that the Do It Now Foundation-health department program is a good one and that something has to be done quickly to halt the alarming rise in drug use in the county.

"We're sitting here playing mumble-peg while Rome burns," Sanson said. "The kids are being destroyed."

Solomon said that he personally felt the matter should be studied some more, perhaps by the county's committee on criminal justice.

"The people are tired of watching this kind of thing," Supervisor Harry said. "The people in the county want us to get moving to fight drug abuse."

After Solomon said he had abstained from voting at last week's committee meeting Sanson asked how the sheriff had voted.

"I think you'd better ask the sheriff that question," Solomon replied.

"I would but he is not here," Sanson said. "But I understand that the sheriff voted against this program. I guess that indicates the extent of his recognition of the drug problem in Santa Cruz County."

Forbus again repeated that "we got shot down by our own people."

Supervisors finally voted to write a letter to the CCCJ regional council, which meets

tomorrow, informing the council that the board of supervisors officially approved the Do It Now-health department proposal and that the actions of Solomon and Sheriff James were not indicative of the feelings of the supervisors. The letter will also ask the council to reaffirm its prior approval of the grant application.

Hit-run crash on Rio road

A 1971 Volkswagen owned by Stephen J. Lawton of 534 Monterey Drive, Rio del Mar, parked on Monterey Drive just east of Alta Drive, was hit by another car at 6 p.m. Friday. The driver of the other car did not stop after the accident. The car he was driving was identified only as white.

A highway patrol car being driven by an employee of the Santa Cruz highway patrol office, Kenneth Voorhees, 52, of Soquel, was brushed by a train Friday at 11:11 a.m. when the car stalled with its nose just over the edge of railroad tracks at Chestnut and Laurel St., in Santa Cruz. Engineer of the train was Clyde Moorhead, 64, of 120 Jefferson St., Watsonville.

A car being driven by Salvador Gomez, 21, of 323 Locust St., was involved in a collision with a truck-trailer, driven by Junior Hudspeth, 40, of Salinas, on Center St., north of Washington St. in Santa Cruz at 3:54 p.m. Friday. Santa Cruz police said Hudspeth, whose vision was obscured, backed into the Gomez car and into a parked car owned by James Odell of Soquel.