

More senior center trouble

By KEN McLAUGHLIN

The brouhaha over the Watsonville Senior Center is over. Right? Wrong.

Just as the embers of the controversy appeared extinguished, a new dispute has arisen from the ashes. Although the dispute doesn't mean that the center might not be built, it does mean that the seniors stand to lose \$50,000 for the project.

At issue is a proposed revenue-sharing contract between the city of Watsonville and the county of Santa Cruz. City officials say the contract is dictatorial, but county officials are wondering what all the fuss is about.

Both the City Council and the Board of Supervisors had been set

Tuesday to approve what appeared to be a routine, bureaucratic agreement that would give the city \$50,000 in federal revenue-sharing funds for the new center (which will be located in the old Mormon Church on East Fifth Street). But both bodies decided to pull the agreement off their agendas at the last minute.

The agreement, written by the staff of the County Administrative Office, would require, among other things, that the city maintain the senior center for the life of the building, and that the primary use of the center be for low- and moderate-income people and minorities.

City fathers say they don't object to the policies. They just don't feel

the county has any right to impose conditions on the revenue-sharing money it promised the city.

"It's a bunch of hooley," Mayor Bill Johnston commented Tuesday night after he announced that the revenue-sharing "agreement" was being pulled off the agenda.

"There's too many things saying 'You do this, you do that,'" he said after the meeting.

City Attorney Don Haile this morning agreed with the council. Said the attorney: "The county is testing us all over again. For their lousy \$50,000, they're trying to put us up against the wall."

Pajaro Valley Supervisor E.

Wayne Moore said this morning that one of the reasons that the agreement was pulled off the supervisors' agenda was that both City Manager John Radin and County Administrative Officer George Newell were out of town. (Radin was attending a funeral, and Newell was on vacation.)

"They were the principal negotiators," Moore said, adding that he hoped the dispute could be ironed out after the two men return.

Moore said he couldn't understand how there could be such a "complete breakdown" in understanding when the senior center issue had been sailing so smoothly.

"I don't know what happened," Moore said.

The supervisor said "there's a real danger" that the dispute might result in the seniors losing the \$50,000. "It could go either way," he said.

Assistant City Manager Vern Hamilton said this morning that he wasn't too familiar with the matter because Radin had handled it. But he said that even if the seniors lose the \$50,000, there "will not be one little delay" in the senior center project.

"It will not be jeopardized," he said. "The council is fully committed to the project."

He conceded, however, that the \$50,000 "would be very helpful." Assuming the seniors got the \$50,000 from the county, they would have about \$550,000 for the project. The

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