

Board Mulls A Change

by Bob Johnson

S.C. News 6/21/93

Food Bank

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors heard Monday from a community group claiming the Food Bank program would run more efficiently if it were allowed to escape the

control of Food and Nutrition Services.

The request for independence comes after a long simmering conflict between Food and Nutrition, the major local food program for seniors and others, and the board of the Second Harvest Food Bank, which

annually distributes 4.5 million pounds of food.

"We think we can deliver more food for less money," said Bernice Belton, a member of the Food Bank board that was disbanded by Food and Nutrition earlier this year.

To underline their claim of greater efficiency, the community group asked the county for an allocation of \$128,525, or 15 percent less than was requested by Food and Nutrition.

The Food Bank board had asked Watsonville area county Supervisor Ray Belgard in April to help mediate an agreement that would allow the Food Bank to go independent.

"We are hereby earnestly requesting that you assist in mobilizing a panel of interested and informed persons to meet and mediate the process of Food Bank independence," Food Bank President Paul Lapidus wrote in

see page 9

continued from page 1

an April 20 letter to Belgard.

That request came after months of failed negotiations that had, at times, apparently turned somewhat nasty.

"All efforts to initiate discussion to spin off the Food Bank have been rebuffed by Food and Nutrition Services," Lapidus wrote.

"Our recent efforts to make the transition through a new non-profit corporation have led Food and Nutrition Services to summarily dissolve the Food Bank Board as an advisory group to Food and Nutrition Services.

"They have also removed me as a Food and Nutrition Services board liaison to the Food Bank."

Food and Nutrition executive director Bob Garcia argues that the Food Bank should remain in the fold because the program has enjoyed marked success.

"The Food Bank is distributing more food to more people than ever before; we have run a very successful Food Bank," Garcia told THE NEWS.

Upwards of a half million pounds of food is distributed to 36,000 people in three counties by the Food Bank, according to Garcia.

"We operate a number of food programs - Golden Age Nutrition for seniors, Women, Infants and Children, child care centers, the Food Bank," Garcia said. "We would lose a great deal of the coordination if the Food Bank went independent."

Food and Nutrition also would stand to lose \$95,000 that the Food Bank annually contributes to administration and overhead.

Although \$30,000 of that money would be cost savings, according to Garcia, the remaining \$65,000 would have to be made up by the other programs administered by Food and Nutrition.

The supervisors are expected to decide which of the two Food Bank funding requests they will approve this Friday.