

Vets go to court to get office back

SANTA CRUZ — The United Veterans Council has gone to court to stop the county from displacing it from a small, ground-floor office in the Veterans Memorial Building on Front Street in Santa Cruz.

County officials have been ordered to appear in Superior Court Dec. 11 to show cause why an injunction shouldn't be issued to prevent them from barring the council from the office. The county's Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services Department is responsible for the operation of the Veterans Memorial Building, which the county owns.

But Superior Court Judge Chris Cottle has refused to issue a temporary restraining order to force the county to allow the council to use the building pending court action.

County parks officials last month evicted the Veterans Council, a coalition of 19 veterans' organizations, from an office in the building. They said the space was needed for their own staffers. Parks officials said management of the building was the county's responsibility and not the Veterans Council's.

Officials also said veterans' organization officers would no longer

be permitted to have keys to the facility, but would be required to sign them out as needed.

That decision angered spokesmen for other veterans' organizations, such as the Disabled American Veterans and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, which continue to occupy office and meeting-room space in the building.

County supervisors subsequently delegated two of their number, board Chairman Gary Patton and Live Oak Supervisor Dan Forbus, to meet with veterans' groups and attempt to work out an amicable solution to the controversy.

Veterans Council spokesmen vowed to fight the county's actions in court.

Last week, Santa Cruz attorney Ray Scott filed the promised court action.

In a signed complaint attached to Scott's injunction request, the Rev. Ed Muegge, treasurer of the Disabled American Veterans and the DAV's representative on the Veterans Council, said voters had granted veterans first call on the Memorial Building 55 years ago. He argued that the county therefore had no right to oust his group from its office there.