

Hospitals New hospital expected to get OK tonight

✓ Watsonville - Hospital
At a special meeting tonight, the Watsonville Planning Commission is expected to approve the special-use building permit for the new Watsonville Community Hospital.

The hospital plans to move from its present Green Valley Road location and build a new facility on the Seagate Technologies property on Airport Boulevard. Seagate has closed its business at the site.

The 27.5-acre site is across the street from the municipal airport,

which has been a focal point for opponents of the project. But major environmental and safety requirements have been met, according to officials. The Federal Aviation Administration has also approved the move. Approval by the Planning Commission is one of the last hurdles the hospital has to clear.

The old hospital was heavily damaged by the 1989 earthquake. Repairing the hospital would cost millions of dollars, and hospital of-

officials decided it would be more cost effective to build a new hospital than repair the old one.

The initial development stage for the new hospital includes plans for a 98-bed facility, with possible expansion to 128 beds. It will also include a helicopter landing area.

Hospital officials estimate a total of 750 employees will work at the new hospital, a net increase of about 100 new jobs.

The move is not without opposi-

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tion. A group calling itself the Coalition for Responsible Airport Management and Policy, made up mostly of pilots, claim the nearby airport poses safety problems, and other opponents believe the hospital would be better off financially if it remained at the present site.

The Planning Commission will meet tonight at 7 p.m. at City Council chambers. For more information call the city's planning department at 728-6020.