

# Hospital's heart unit bid rejected

By BOB SMITH

Following a marathon session that didn't end until 2:30 on Friday morning, a hearing panel voted to deny Community Hospital of Santa Cruz's application to open an open heart surgery unit.

The action by the five member panel from the Mid-Coast Health Systems Agency could be overturned at the state level by the Office of Statewide Health Planning.

But Community Hospital officials were visibly dejected by the 4-1 vote at the end of the 7½-hour hearing at UC-Santa Cruz to deny the Certificate of Need that federal and state regulations require before any new service can receive Medi-Cal and Medicare reimbursements.

Jean Adams, the hospital's executive director, said in a prepared statement following the meeting:

"We are profoundly disappointed at the decision of the Mid-Coast HSA panel to recommend denial of our proposed cardiac care center ... We do not believe that the health needs of the Monterey Bay area have been served by that decision."

Adams said Santa Cruz Community Hospital will continue to pursue the project at the state level.

"With last night's vote, the issue goes to the state level itself ... since the decision has been made, we welcome state level opportunity to further refute and clarify the findings of the Mid-Coast Health Systems Agency staff which we have proven

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to be grossly inaccurate on several counts. Combined with the number of sheer factual errors, the statistical slanting of the staff can only be described as unbecoming the overall professionalism of local health planning," the statement read.

He also thanked the hospital's supporters for their backing before and during the hearings. The state office now has 90 days to either approve the hospital's application or call for another public hearing.

David Wright, executive director of the Mid-Coast Health Systems Agency in Salinas, predicted Thursday night before the vote that the state office will probably combine the Santa Cruz Community application with one now pending from Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital and consider them in one hearing as competing applications.

Community Hospital officials had spent 18 months in preliminary work on the proposal, and hospital staff members had devoted the last six weeks to an intensive review of the material in preparation for the the hearings this week.

A massive advertising and public relations campaign had been waged by the hospital to generate public support for the application.

But despite the pres-

ence of nearly 600 people at the first hearing last Wednesday night and approximately 200 at the final session Thursday night at UC-Santa Cruz, panel members faulted the hospital for its inability to keep even half of its 180 beds filled with patients and its ability to capture only a 26 percent share of the Santa Cruz County hospital market.

That, they said, was more important than the public support for this application.

Cardiac patients who require the diagnostic procedure called "catheterization" — the injection of a X-ray-opaque dye into the blood stream just outside the heart while a high-speed X-ray machine photographs the blood vessels and the heart chambers — and the cardiac bypass operation that frequently follows such a diagnostic procedure must now go to Santa Clara Valley hospitals such as Good Samaritan and O'Conner hospitals in San Jose.

State standards now require a hospital to project a minimum of 500 catheterizations and 350 bypass surgeries within three years after the service is first offered for it to win approval.

State and industry statistics showed that in 1981 there were 348 catheterizations and 143

surgeries on Santa Cruz area patients, 221 catheterizations and 84 surgeries on Watsonville residents, 370 catheterizations and 132 surgeries on Salinas area patients, and 218 catheterizations and 102 surgeries on Monterey Peninsula residents.

Santa Cruz area cardiologists and internists told the hearing board nearly all of the Santa Cruz patients would be referred to Community Hospital for the work, and doctors in Monterey County would probably send 20 percent of their patients to the Santa Cruz facility.

Dr. Pat O'Grady, a cardiologist practicing at both Santa Cruz Community and Dominican

Hospitals, said he does 200-250 catheterizations a year and he believes other cardiologists in the Santa Cruz area perform a similar number, making a total of 400-450. Santa Cruz area patients referred to the Santa Clara Valley hospitals annually.

Panel members remained unconvinced, however, that Community Hospital could meet the state standards.

They were also skeptical of the comparatively high cost projections for the tests and surgery at Community, when compared with Good Samaritan Hospital of Campbell, the closest hospital now offering the procedures.

The HSA staff said Santa Cruz Community projects a total hospital cost in 1985 of \$20,982 for a catheterization and bypass operation.

Good Samaritan now charges \$15,739 for the same procedures.

