

County overview of nursing homes not likely soon

Santa Cruz County won't give up its efforts to take over from the state the duty of overseeing the operation of skilled nursing homes in the county.

However, in making that decision Tuesday morning, county supervisors implicitly conceded that there is no chance for such a county takeover before next year at the earliest. The county, at the behest of its Committee on Nursing Home Care, has been negotiating with the state over the possibility of such a takeover. The nursing home committee suggested such a move on the grounds that the state was doing a poor job of inspecting nursing homes and that the county, which could have personnel available here all the time, could do a better job.

But the county staff

which has been conducting the negotiations recommended Tuesday morning that the negotiations be dropped because, in effect, it would be too costly a venture in these days of budget restraints.

The Committee on Nursing Home Care, however, pleaded with the board not to drop such negotiations and even came up with a budget it said the county could live with, provided it could talk the state into allowing it to take over the nursing home licensing and inspection functions only. (One of the conditions the state had laid down for any such takeover was that it couldn't be restricted to nursing homes only but would have to include the entire range of health services now under direct state supervision.)

James Rumble, a

spokesman for the nursing home committee, said he believed the state could be pressured into allowing just the nursing home takeover.

But Elli Hall, director of the county's Health Services Agency, said an effective inspection and licensing program could not be carried out under the "budget" drawn up by the nursing home committee and that it would actually cost the county "at least \$80,000" over what the state would contribute to take over the program.

The supervisors decided that it was still worthwhile pursuing the goal of a county takeover, even though it might be some time in the future. They instructed the staff to continue the effort, enlisting the aid of state legislators and pressing for "an appropriate funding level" from the state.