

Support for FNS denied

Senior Information & Referral (I&R) does not support Food and Nutrition Services' proposal for a separate senior center in Watsonville, according to the agency's project director.

When FNS recently submitted its request to the Board of Supervisors for \$16,450 in federal revenue-sharing funds to begin operation of a new center on North Main Street, FNS submitted along with the application a letter of "support" for the proposed move of its meals program from the Watsonville International Senior Center on East Beach Street.

"Apparently this letter has been misconstrued to reflect support for Food and Nutrition's move to a particular location," says I&R project director Olga Cole in a letter to Gary Patton, chairman of the Board of Supervisors. "This was not my intent."

Mrs. Cole says she does indeed support a move from the "present, inadequate site, but only — as stated — to a more appropriate location which would be geared to serve ALL

(her emphasis) seniors in the Watsonville area."

She said this morning that FNS had sent her a letter asking for her agency's support of FNS' proposal to move the meals program to a building at 1035 North Main. "They wanted us to say we have been involved in the discussion" regarding the proposed move, Mrs. Cole said. "But we weren't."

As a result, she responded with a more general letter saying she supports the idea of FNS moving its meals program out of the Beach Street site.

"I've never even seen the site (on North Main)," she said.

Mrs. Cole said she was opposed to the idea of two senior centers in Watsonville, adding that she hoped the dispute between FNS and City Hall could be worked out.

The dispute revolves around the city's reluctance to adopt policies that FNS feels will promote more participation of low-income and minority seniors in the center. Because the city chose to adopt its

own guidelines, FNS has decided to boycott the city's proposed senior center at Main and Rodriguez streets, creating the possibility that Watsonville will have two senior centers.

I&R is a non-profit agency that helps seniors by providing information and referring them to other agencies for help.

One employee of the agency, according to Mrs. Cole, is at the Watsonville International Center on Beach Street for five hours per day during the week.

FNS' move to North Main is being supported by Sunrise Senior Services, an agency based in Aptos.

County supervisors are expected to decide in June whether to give Food and Nutrition funds to operate its proposed "multi-purpose center" for one year.

Pajaro Valley Supervisor E. Wayne Moore has called the FNS proposal "asinine," but his fellow supervisors earlier this week decided not to support either the city's or FNS' position.