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Sentinel

Boardwalk union talks under way

SANTA CRUZ — The Seaside Co. and employees of two Boardwalk restaurants were in negotiations this morning over the employees' desire to unionize.

So far, 67 employees (90 percent) of the Cocoanut Grove and Wellington restaurants have filed to join the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union Local 483 of Monterey. The Seaside Co. is contesting such a union election, saying if any is to take place that it must include all 500 to 600 seasonal employees at the Boardwalk.

An officer of the National Labor Relations Board is hearing arguments and will make a determination on who will be involved in the election.

Union organizer Joanie Ward contends the Seaside Co. is pushing for an election by all Boardwalk employees because it is difficult to organize temporary employees.

Most of the Boardwalk's seasonal employees are students who work the summer season. The HERE Union, she said, would not be interested in taking dues "from people we couldn't adequately benefit."

Not only would the seasonal employees not be eligible for many union benefits, added Ward, "but we wouldn't be interested in taking 500 ride operators. We are a food servers' union catering to professional, permanent, trained food service industry."

Ward says the Cocoanut Grove and Wellington are the only non-fast food restaurants on the Boardwalk. They serve sit-down meals and have waitresses and waiters.

According to Ward, those waitresses and waiters currently have no benefits — no paid vacations, no pension, no medical insurance.

Bartenders at the Cocoanut Grove make \$4.50 an hour with no benefits. Union bartenders average \$7 an hour, she said.

She named job security, effective grievance procedure and benefits as top priorities.