

Convention Center Gets Top Priority In OEDP Report

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33 By BRUCE McPHERSON

Not surprisingly, the proposed convention center complex at Lighthouse Point received "top priority" in the recent Overall Economic Development Program report for the county.

The 78-page report was sent to the Economic Development Administration for review. EDA makes grants to counties with unemployment rates greater than six per cent and which have projects planned that will assist in lowering that rate.

In 1969, the county's average unemployment rate was eight per cent. In off-season months such as January and February it hits the 13 per cent mark. The early part of the calendar year is prime time for conventions.

With the updated OEDP report and a letter of intent from the Hilton Hotel chain that it plans to build a hotel at the Lighthouse Point site, both requested by EDA, the local Joint Powers Authority has reactivated its 1968 grant application for \$900,000 to the administration to assist in construction of the convention center proper.

The new OEDP report states that a survey in 1968 revealed approximately 300 to 500 new jobs would be provided by the convention center-hotel-shopping center complex. It added that an additional 1,000 seasonal jobs could be made year-round.

It continued that most of the jobs would be "second jobs," winter jobs, those for minority workers, including displaced agricultural workers.

The survey estimates that with the convention center, Santa Cruz could attract 48,000 delegates a year (150,000 delegate days), and at the \$35 expenditure per delegate day anticipated by the local Convention Bureau, it would mean an input of \$5.2 million annually for the service businesses.

A second priority in the report, in conjunction with the first, is development of a job training program that would train 240 employees in the first year at a cost of \$240,640.

Other action projects in the report are a county-approved minority recruitment and training program, and establishment of the Central Coast Counties Development Corporation.

The CCDC is under contract with EDA to provide economic development services in Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito counties with emphasis on management assistance to new and existing businesses on minority-owned enterprises.

In addition, the Refurbish, Refixture, Remodel program of the mall area, and studies on countywide transportation, open space, and fire protection programs are mentioned.

Other facets of the report deal

with water and sewage (in San Lorenzo Valley and East Cliff) facilities, the yacht harbor expansion and the regional shopping center at 41st Avenue.

The OEDP Committee was made up from the County Industrial Commission this year, but the committee has since been expanded to include 30 representatives drawn from local government, public works, agricultural, educational, industrial, recreational, natural and human resources, commercial and financial interests.

The report notes a May, 1970, statement from the Department of Human Resources Development that Santa Cruz will "experience the fastest employment growth" of Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties.

The department's report adds, "Wide seasonal fluctuations in employment will continue. The trade and services industries will expand, but unless there is large increases in convention business, these sectors will also continue to experience seasonal employment movements."

NEW SAILOR

Seaman Apprentice Dino A. Dimeo, son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred J. Dimeo of 114 Escalona Court, graduated recently from basic training at the Naval Training Center in San Diego. Dimeo is a 1970 graduate of Santa Cruz High School.