

# Paramedic contract approved

By BOB SMITH

Paramedic service in the Aptos Fire District will continue under a new contract approved Tuesday by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors.

The contract is a three-way agreement among the county, fire district and Dominican Santa Cruz Hospital that allows the district to continue to operate its paramedic service — the only service of its type in the county at present — under the supervision of Dominican's emergency room physicians.

A major change in the agreement now requires the fire department to provide two-man paramedic teams for medical emergencies. The old agreement allowed the department to staff the paramedic rescue van with one paramedic-fireman and one emergency medical technician (EMT) firemen.

Fire board chairman Richard Duchscher said the hospital staff has agreed to be more flexible on the two-man requirement if the district continues to have paramedic personnel problems.

The hospital, earlier this summer, had taken the position that if the fire department could only supply one paramedic fireman on a particular shift, then patients would be ordered transported to the hospital without paramedic field treatment, negating much of the benefit of the pilot program.

Duchscher said the hospital softened its position because of newspaper publicity given the stance.

The three-way agreement does not affect the pending proposal to allow private ambulance companies to establish paramedic service throughout the remainder of Santa Cruz County.

The department has been short-staffed with its paramedics for the last several months because fireman-paramedic Nick Kolopos has been disabled with a hip injury. The other five paramedics have been doubling up to cover Kolopos' shifts.

Now, Fire Chief Nick Baumgartner told the board Tuesday night another paramedic is taking medication for a severe ulcer and may be forced off duty.

The department is presently considering hiring a trained paramedic to substitute for the ailing firemen during the next three months, Baumgartner said.

In other business, the fire board approved a new agreement with the State Public Employees Retirement System, adding survivors' benefits to the existing firemen's pension plan. The increased coverage will raise the district's premiums 2.137 percent, increasing the district's payments to the retirement system from \$106,737 last year to an estimated \$111,996 this fiscal year.

The new package is part of an overall wage and fringe benefit program approved by the board earlier this month for the firemen.

APTOS  
LIBRARY  
7695 SOC  
APTOS, CALIF  
REFER

WATSONVILLE  
REGISTER-PAJARONI