

# County Accepts In Concept Proposal For Psychiatric Facility

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The county Board of Supervisors Tuesday accepted in concept Dominican Santa Cruz Hospital's long-proposed offer to build and operate a 30-bed inpatient psychiatric facility at its Soquel Drive complex.

The county administrative staff was directed to proceed with negotiations that would lead toward (1) the delicensing of the county's present neuropsychiatric inpatient facility on Emeline Avenue and (2) the development of a patient care contract with Dominican for indigents requiring psychiatric hospitalization.

The supervisors' final approval of

Dominican's offer will not come before late January, at least, despite Aptos Supervisor Marilyn Liddicoat's efforts to get the acceptance finalized while the present board is still in power.

Assistant County Administrative Officer Pat Busch stated the action could not be much before late January because of contract and other considerations.

One of the considerations was then clarified when Liddicoat asked Wayne Boss, Dominican's associate administrator: "Is this contract contingent on the outcome of your application for expansion; do you need those beds (47 medical - surgical beds) you have applied to the state for to make this psychiatric facility feasible?"

Boss said the offer to build the psychiatric facility is contingent upon Dominican getting state approval of the planned expansion, and he added: "We hope to know the decision the latter part of January."

Liddicoat said: "This is a very important step. One thing we in the county have been lacking are facilities for our private psychiatrists to put their patients in when they need to lock up their patients."

The supervisors' acceptance in concept of Dominican's offer was unanimous and was based upon a recommendation made by George Newell, county administrative officer, Elinor Hall, acting Health Services Agency administrator, and the HSA Inpatient Psychiatric Service Task Force.

It was the Inpatient Task Force that developed the recommendation for acceptance of Dominican's offer.

Along with that recommendation, the Inpatient Task Force made many others, all of which were accepted by the supervisors. In some cases, the recommendations were adopted outright.

The Task Force recommendations adopted in concept, including Dominican's offer to build and operate a psychiatric facility, included:

1. That the county plan to close its present neuropsychiatric facility and contract with Dominican for acute inpatient psychiatric services.
2. That the HSA establish a broadly-based committee of public and private

mental health providers and consumers to assist in program planning and design of the new inpatient unit at Dominican.

3. That Dominican be requested to apply as soon as possible for a certificate of need to construct the new unit so that implementation of this service will not be delayed.

The Task Force recommendations adopted outright included: that the county should plan to open a pilot program of two or more mental health foster homes no later than fiscal 1981-82 as a component of crisis care, that the county should plan for an expanded crisis intervention team, including 24-hour coverage, that the county should plan to open and operate a psychiatric infirmary as part of the second stage development of the new county jail, that the county should give high priority to expansion of the mental health management staff, and that the county plan to expand the Satellite and Transition House program as soon as savings are available because of the new Dominican unit.

The Task Force was chaired by Linda Bergthold, who is president of the Mid-Coast Health Systems Agency governing body.

This Task Force met weekly for six months to consider the mental health problems in the county and to develop recommended solutions, supervisors were told by Hall.

The Task Force was lauded by Supervisor Gary Patton, who said: "I want to thank them for an excellent report."

Patton praised Dominican Santa Cruz Hospital, as well, saying that "thanks should go to them very publicly for going into this public service for the community."

The county is under virtually an economic cannon to change its system for providing neuropsychiatric care to in-

digents and other countresponsible patients.

The county expects to be told this fiscal year that its Emeline Avenue psychiatric facility is ineligible for federal Medi-Cal dollars because the rules require that inpatient psychiatric services be provided by an acute-care hospital. The county stopped operating its acute-care hospital, where the psychiatric unit is, in the early 1970s.

When the cutoff comes, the county will lose an estimated \$256,000 yearly in federal Medi-Cal payments for care to the indigent.

If that happens, and if no agreement is made with Dominican, which is an acute-care hospital, the county will have to use the money it now receives from the state for the total county mental health program to finance the inpatient psychiatric unit. Should that occur, the county would have little money available for Crisis Intervention and other highly valued mental health programs.

The county is also under virtually a health care cannon to get more psychiatric facilities available for public and private patients. Since 1976 the county has been the sole provider of inpatient psychiatric care. The occupancy rate at its 18-bed facility is running 96.6 percent this year, with conditions so crowded that only the most acutely ill can be admitted. Last year the occupancy rate was 99 percent.

Numerous health care specialists Tuesday urged supervisors to approve the task force recommendations, including Idell Evans of the county Mental Health Advisory Board, Dr. Shan Crockett of the Santa Cruz County Association of Psychiatrists, Dr. Barbara Murray, who heads the outpatient psychology services for the county mental health staff, Dr. Bruce Dunn, president of the County Medical Society and Dr. Robert Newport.

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