

Civil Service 7-25-69

Nobody Knows Yet If Lifeguards Will Strike

Nobody knows whether Santa Cruz' 13 beach lifeguards will walk off the job Saturday — including the lifeguards themselves.

Lifeguard Captain Alan Hilton said today that if Assistant City Manager Joe Ringrose can arrange a joint meeting between the guards and the city council the lifeguards will stay at their posts — at least until the meeting is held. But if Ringrose can't set up the meeting, out the lifeguards go, according to Hilton.

Ringrose said he would communicate the guards' request for a meeting to City Manager

Dave Koester. But he added he has no idea whether the meeting can be arranged.

Ringrose and City Personnel Director John Donlevy huddled with the guards this morning on the guards' demand for higher wages. After that session, Donlevy said, "We're very optimistic the guards will stay on the beach. We hope they don't do anything rash. There is no question but what we have a good lifeguard service."

Donlevy said he hoped to undertake a comprehensive joint study with the guards as to what is the city's precise need

is in the area of lifeguard service.

Meantime, the city is hedging its bets by recruiting replacement lifeguards. Donlevy said 10 to 15 applications already have been received, but he doesn't know how many of the applicants are qualified to man the lifeguard posts.

He said the city would continue the recruitment, and in the event the current guards walk out, would provide the best lifeguard service possible on the beach.

The lifeguards threatened their Saturday's walkout at Tuesday night's city council meeting after the city granted them a 7.5 per cent pay raise. That would have amounted to a hike from the \$2.32 current hourly starting wage to \$2.49. But the guards had asked for \$3.

Hilton pointed out the \$3 figure still is 40 cents below starting wage for state lifeguards on nearby beaches.

"After going through proper channels, we now feel that the only way we can inform the people of our situation is to strike," he said after the council meeting.

Ringrose said if the guards do walk out Saturday, the beaches will remain open, but swimmers will be advised they are entering the water at their own risk because of the lack of lifeguard supervision. He said the city would continue to protect the most hazardous areas as best it could.

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