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Work furlough decision delayed by supervisors

SANTA CRUZ — If low-risk, non-violent women prisoners are allowed to go home rather than to jail, they may be returning to the environment that caused them to become criminals.

That was a concern expressed by county supervisors Tuesday as they considered closing the Women's Work Furlough Facility and replacing it with an in-home supervision program.

After much discussion, they continued a decision on the matter two weeks so Supervisor Robley Levy could talk to judges.

Supervisor Dan Forbus criticized Levy for the delay, and said it will cost the county \$5,000 to keep the facility open for the two weeks.

The Women's Work Furlough Facility houses women criminals who are allowed to go to work or school, and then return to the facility at night.

But because of low use of the facility, County Administrative Officer George Newell is recommending it be closed and a less expensive, in-home supervision program be set up its place.

The facility has an average occupancy of 6.2 prisoners.

Closing the facility would save the county \$30,000 for the remainder of this fiscal year and \$136,000 in 1983-84, Newell said.

The problem with the facility, according to County Analyst Carol Girvetz, is that it's designed for long-term prisoners who are a low risk. There just aren't that many of these type of prisoners, she said.

Levy questioned whether it would be wise to send these prisoners home where they would be supervised periodically by a probation-type officer.