

# Capitola *Health Center* supports medical center

## 24-bed hospital would open in '95

By **DONNA KIMURA**  
Sentinel staff writer

**CAPITOLA** — Despite objections by two hospitals, council members have given their support to a medical center proposed here.

The City Council voted 4-0 Thursday to approve a conditional use permit for a 24-bed hospital planned at Bay Avenue and Highway 1.

Councilman Bob Bucher, whose wife is a real-estate agent for the health center, abstained from voting.

The proposed Capitola Health Center would include an outpatient surgical center and doctors' offices.

"I haven't met anyone who doesn't want choice in the health care that is provided," said Doug Byrd, a general partner in the center. "That's what we are offering — a choice in getting their health care needs met, and that's exciting."

Ground will be broken on the \$10 million project in June and it would open about June 1995, Byrd said, noting the opposition from the existing hospitals in the county.

"It's been three years of sheer hell fighting Dominican Hospital," Byrd said.

Local hospital administrators contend the new facility would provide care only for those with the ability to pay, leaving Dominican, which serves the northern part of the county, and Watsonville Community Hospital, which serves south county, to pick up the tab for the poor.

"Although the council made the decision they thought best, we don't agree that the Capitola Health Center is in the best interest of the community," said Sister

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Julie Hyer, president and chief executive officer of Dominican, in a prepared statement Friday.

Because the proposed facility would not have an emergency room, critics charged that it would not see patients who do not have private physician, which includes a high number of Medi-Cal and uninsured patients.

"If you're going in the acute-care hospital business, you should be in the acute-care hospital business 24 hours a day," said John Friel, president and chief executive officer of Watsonville Community Hospital on Friday.

He wished the developers good luck with the project, but maintained that another facility is not needed.

"They don't need us, but the community does," Byrd said.

The center will obtain a license to serve Medi-Cal and Medicare patients, he said.

The project was approved with about 35 conditions attached to it, including a requirement to build a loop road to the center, limiting the number of doctors in the building at one time to six; and developing landscaping to enhance the habitat next to the nearby Soquel Creek.

The city also has said that any change in the use or the phasing of the project will have to go before the City Council for approval.