

# Santa Cruz hospital wins OK for heart-surgery unit

By LANE WALLACE

Community Hospital of Santa Cruz has received approval to build what will be the first heart-surgery unit in the Monterey Bay area.

Larry Meeks, director of the Statewide Office of Health Planning and Development, Wednesday signed a "certificate of need" for the hospital, the final step needed for approval.

Meeks' approval came over the objection of the staff of the statewide office and the Mid-Coast Health Systems Agency, a consumer-oriented agency which reviews health facility needs.

Ted Bogue, a planning and development associate with the Health Systems Agency, charged that the proper steps weren't taken before the certificate was granted, and that political pressure was brought to bear on state health officials.

Bogue said the HSA plans to challenge the approval, possibly through a lawsuit. Derek Pogson, who handles public relations for the statewide

office, said there are no procedures (other than a lawsuit) for a challenge.

The approval for Community Hospital should also clear the way for Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital to build a heart-surgery unit. A certificate of need for that unit was granted last November, but was held up when Community Hospital of Santa Cruz filed a suit against the state.

Community's suit was aimed at getting its own unit, although it also blocked the Salinas approval. Richard Swanson, Community Hospital's public relations director, said Community will now drop its suit.

HSA plans a challenge to the Salinas certificate of need as well, Bogue said.

Because Community Hospital will use existing space, it should be able to open the heart-surgery unit by next spring, Swanson said. Salinas Valley, which will have to construct a building for its unit, doesn't expect to be ready for two

years, said Fred Sorri of the hospital administrative staff.

Dr. Robert Kass, a heart surgeon at Cedars of Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles, will move to Santa Cruz and will do virtually all the heart operations at Community Hospital. Swanson said the hospital expects to perform about 150 operations in the first year.

Community will also open a heart-catheterization lab, where angiograms and angioplasty can be performed. An angiogram is a diagnostic technique in which dye is injected into blood vessels to determine where blockages are. In angioplasty, a catheter with a tiny balloon is inserted into a blood vessel. The balloon is then inflated inside the vessel and used to scrape away plaque.

Two weeks ago, Watsonville Community Hospital received state approval to build a catheterization lab, but only diagnostic procedures would be done. Angioplasty requires the backup of a heart surgery unit in case something goes wrong.