

# Dominican Kept Pledge On Psychiatric Proposal

This morning's announcement by Dominican Hospital that it would build a psychiatric facility made good a pledge given on the subject to the Board of Supervisors last February by Associate Hospital Administrator Wayne Boss. (see story Page 1).

Boss pledged at that time that Dominican would consult with county health officials, officials of Community Hospital of Santa Cruz and the Mid-Coast Health Systems Agency to try to work out a solution to the need for inpatient psychiatric services at a local hospital.

Not only did Dominican consult with these agencies over the past three months, but it developed a package of its own to offer the county in the event no other solution were offered.

In a communication to Pat Liberty, chairman of the county Board of Supervisors, Hospital Administrator Sister Josephine Sullivan pointed out that because of the costs of both building and operating the psychiatric unit, Dominican's decision to go ahead with the project is dependent upon the county contracting with the hospital for inpatient psychiatric services.

Boss elaborated on the economics of the proposal in a discussion with The Sentinel. He said that the offer is necessarily contingent upon the hospital getting a Certificate of Need for the total expansion and the licenses for 47 medical-surgical beds now assigned to the county.

Boss said: "The skilled nursing care beds are much needed by this community but these do not pay their way, the pay for services does not equal the costs of the services.

"Even if the county contracts with the hospital to provide inpatient psychiatric services, the best Dominican can hope for is to break even or

get a very tiny return from this operation.

"This is why the addition of 47 medical-surgical beds is so important. The revenue that these beds provides will help pay the costs of the health care services which are needed but just don't pay their own way."

Dominican is a non-profit organization that does not have the enormous resources necessary to carry all the health care services needed if the hospital does not have some source of revenue from which to draw, Boss said.

Pat Busch, assistant county administrative officer, and Elinor Hall, acting Health Services Agency administrator, gained a positive response from Dominican to a July 2 paper summarizing matters that should be considered and addressed by any hospital in a proposal to assume psychiatric services.

The county officials said that if a new facility is constructed it should have a capacity of approximately 30 beds and should serve both private and public patients. The management and operation of the psychiatric unit would be the responsibility of the hospital, but the county would have a voice in the psychiatric program provided in the hospital's ward for public patients.

In 1980-81 the county will provide inpatient psychiatric services at a cost of about \$204 per patient per day.

Sister Josephine stated that in more than three months of consultation with Community Hospital of Santa Cruz it was ascertained that Community officials did not believe its facility lent itself to the development of psychiatric services.

"We felt the only option open to us, short of ignoring this crucial problem, was for Dominican to tackle it," Sister Josephine said.

If the county accepts Dominican's offer then the county would close its neuropsychiatric ward at the former county hospital and contract with Dominican for the service.

Sister Josephine called for full public discussion of the proposal as soon as appropriate.

The Dominican offer goes a long way toward meeting the goal of the Mid-Coast Health Systems Agency for a solution of the psychiatric health care problems here. Alan Samuels, MHSA executive director, has long claimed that psychiatric care and skilled nursing care are two of the more critical needs in this area.

During the long discussions with Community, Dominican gave Anthony Daigle, Community administrator, two options to consider.

Under the first option, Community would build and operate the 30-bed psychiatric unit, the county would delicense its 18 psychiatric beds and contract with Community for the care of patients the county is responsible for. Community, in turn, would delicense 30 medical-surgical beds when applying for a Certificate of Need for the new project.

In addition, Dominican would undertake to underwrite a reasonable occupancy level at Community. Community would support Dominican's bid to the state for the 47 medical-surgical bed licenses owned by the county.

Under the second option, Dominican would build and operate the new facility.

In a letter dated July 15, Daigle replied to the Dominican proposal, stating that his hospital does not lend itself to the development of psychiatric services but that he would support the development of psychiatric services at Dominican or would join with Dominican in supporting a psy-

chiatric hospital by another party.

Daigle refused in his letter to agree to support Dominican's bid for the county's medical-surgical beds, without which Dominican has said it cannot expand.

Daigle repeated previous public statements that he feels there are now sufficient medical-surgical beds available in the county and that "by 1990 there will be a need for only 239 beds—far less than the 330 beds already available."

Busch told The Sentinel the county is willing to consider a proposal from other hospitals. "So far," Busch said, "only Dominican has indicated a willingness to help us solve this problem of providing good inpatient psychiatric service to all who need it."

Last February the Board of Supervisors approved an agreement with Dominican covering the provision of health care for the indigent. Under this agreement Dominican gave free benefits valued at \$1.17 million in exchange for county willingness to delicense 47 medical-surgical beds and support Dominican's application for them.

This agreement was opposed by AMI, owners of Community Hospital, and by Harold Sundean, the builder and first owner of that hospital.

At the Board of Supervisors hearing on this agreement Dr. Shan Crockett and other members of the Santa Cruz County Association of Psychiatrists called for a solution to the problem of inpatient psychiatric service before supervisors enter an agreement on indigent care.

Dominican later voluntarily improved the benefits to be offered the indigent care program.

Now Dominican is offering to provide the psychiatric care services, too.