

# High school endorsed

## Scotts Valley a step closer

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SANTA CRUZ — The proposal for a Scotts Valley high school won a major endorsement Thursday, gaining the approval of the county Board of Education.

"I think it's time that Scotts Valley has a high school," said Jeffrey Almquist, a member of the county board.

The construction of a hometown high school has been a longstanding dream for the Scotts Valley community. More than 500 Scotts Valley students attend high schools in Santa Cruz.

The unanimous decision by the seven-member county board Thursday puts the dream one step closer to becoming a reality.

"I'm elated. I'm absolutely elat-

ed," said Mike Smith, a father of three active in the campaign for a Scotts Valley high school. "Things are falling into place on our side."

The county's recommendation will be forwarded to the state Department of Education. The state will hold a public hearing before issuing a decision.

If the state approves the petition for a high school, it will rule on whether the vote on a high school is among Scotts Valley residents only, or would include voters in the larger Santa Cruz City Schools District.

If the state follows the recommendation of the county board, it will give the deciding ballot measure to the voters in the Scotts Valley school district.

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## Scotts Valley

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The right to vote has become the crux of the debate.

Officials at the Santa Cruz school district say their voters should have a say because the district stands to lose more than 500 students and \$1.8 million annually in daily attendance revenue.

But Scotts Valley officials fear the measure would be defeated if it were to go before Santa Cruz voting population, which outnumbers Scott Valley's 8-1.

Although the Santa Cruz school district will lose \$1.8 million a year in state money for daily attendance, its expenses will also be reduced, board members said.

Since students will be phased in at the new high school one class at a time over four years, the economic impacts to Santa Cruz schools could be lessened with careful planning, they said.

"It seems unfair to me for a large

group of people to vote on an issue that financially impacts a smaller group of people," Almquist said.

The measure for a proposed Scotts Valley high school should go hand in hand with a bond measure to fund the construction, the county board recommended.

The state weighs heavily the recommendation of the local board, said Jim Maxwell, assistant superintendent for the county.

"It's a victory for the community and for the youth in the community," said Andre LaCouture, superintendent of the Scotts Valley Union School District.

But the battle is not over, and David Sklarz, superintendent of the Santa Cruz City Schools District says his hopes are not dashed.

"I'm disappointed because I think (the county) strayed from their legal mandate," Sklarz said. "I expect (the state) will reverse this decision."