

# Board to take up hospital, library

Several politically touchy issues will confront Santa Cruz County supervisors at their Tuesday meeting. Not the least of these potentially explosive matters is the one involving a tentative agreement between the county and Dominican Hospital. This agreement calls for the county to surrender its acute-care hospital license so that Dominican can apply for the 47 medical-surgical beds that go with the license.

In return, Dominican would provide a stipulated amount of care for the county's indigent patients and certain other services of financial benefit to the county.

When first announced, the agreement appeared to have smooth sailing. But complications arose when Community Hospital of Santa Cruz came up with a counter-offer which Community asserted would be more advantageous to the county than the Dominican offer.

Opposition to the Dominican agreement sprang up from other sources, too. And this morning the formidable voice of the Santa Cruz County Assn. of Psychiatrists joined in.

Specifically, the psychiatrists are asking the Board of Supervisors "not to commit itself to an agreement with either Dominican Hospital or Community Hospital without first including in that agreement an adequate solution to the problem of in-patient psychiatric care."

The psychiatrists made it clear at a

press conference attended by six of them that they believe mental health care in the county has been grossly neglected. In fact, the word "outrage" was used to describe their reaction to what they perceive to be just one more example of the issue of mental health care not only being "pushed into the background, but seemingly forgotten."

Just about everybody agrees that the status of mental health care, particularly of in-patient facilities for the acutely ill, has been inadequate in this county for years. The only acute care facility in operation at present is the county's psychiatric hospital at the medical complex on Emeline Street in Santa Cruz. There are 18 beds there, not nearly enough to handle the need. No one disputes that.

But the psychiatrists charge that precious little is being done about it. They acknowledge that there is plenty of blame to go around for the situation, but they had some especially critical words for Dominican Hospital.

Shan Crockett, chairman of the psychiatrists' organization, said that three years ago Dominican closed down its psychiatric facility "right out from under us."

That left only the inadequate county facility, with a sort of auxiliary facility in Crisis House, a facility in the city of Santa Cruz scheduled to be shut down due to Prop. 13-imposed financial restrictions.

Aside from the hospital's agreement, the supervisors will be considering a request by Supervisor Gary Patton that they seek a delay of another six months in bringing the county's General Plan into conformance with state law. The county is now operating its rural land use policies under an agreement with the state because its General Plan needs to be revised to conform with the law. Hearings before the Planning Commission on those revisions are going on currently and the revisions are scheduled to be adopted by May 15, which would mean that at that time the county can once again take control of its own land use policies.

Patton's recommendation that an extension be sought — which would mean in effect that the county would continue to be under the thumb of the state's Office of Planning and Research in rural land use matters — reflects the charge by some people that the public hasn't had enough opportunity to study the proposed revisions and make informed judgments.

The conservative majority of the board is almost certain to regard Patton's recommendation as an effort to appease environmentalist sentiments in the county, with perhaps an eye on the June election when the seats of every supervisor except Patton will be up for election.

The board also will be considering a suggestion of county Administrative Officer George Newell that it explore the possibility of attaching the Freedom library to the Watsonville library as a way of insuring the continuation of the Freedom branch. Newell said the City Council will be considering the matter Tuesday evening as well.