

## Reply To Grand Jury

# Supervisors Standing Behind Agreement With Dominican

The county Board of Supervisors has denied a charge by the 1979-80 grand jury that the county's "indigent care agreement with Dominican Hospital resembles a maneuver in a chess match more than a component of constructive planning addressing consumer interests as a first priority."

Furthermore, the supervisors assert in an official response to grand jury criticisms: "the board and previous boards have supported health planning, the Mid-Coast Health Systems Agency and the development of a coordinated and comprehensive hospital service in the county."

An MHSA hearing panel on Oct. 28 will consider an application by Dominican Santa Cruz Hospital for a certificate of need for a 114-bed expansion.

Key to this expansion are 47 medical-surgical beds which are licensed to the county but are non-existent and have been in that category since the county closed its hospital in 1973.

Supervisors have agreed to delicense these beds and to support Dominican's application for them in exchange for an extension of the county's contract with Dominican for 30 years at reduced rates.

"This insures that the county can satisfy its legal health care responsibilities without reopening medical surgical services at the county hospital," supervisors state. "Reopening medical surgical services would not only be costly but would result in three hospitals offering medical surgical service within an area of approximately one square mile."

Moreover, the supervisors state, "conservatively estimated, the financial provisions of the agreement with Dominican will save the taxpayers approximately \$1.2 million during the first 15 years of the agreement."

The indigent-care agreement with Dominican was criticized strongly by both Community Hospital of Santa Cruz and by Harold Sundean, original owner of Community Hospital, early this year.

Community submitted a proposal of its own after Anthony Daigle, who administers the hospital for its new owners, Americam Medical International, said his hospital had not been invited to submit a proposal and that he had not known of the county's interest in getting such a proposal until just a few days before the Dominican proposal was presented to the board with a recommendation for acceptance.

The county's deputy administrative officer, Pat Busch, analyzed Community's proposal and declared the Dominican proposal to be more beneficial to the county.

Supervisors say Dominican has, in effect, offered much more than a money-saving indigent-care program in exchange for the licenses to the 47 medical-surgical beds.

Offered also, the supervisors point out in their response to the grand jury, is a skilled nursing care facility at Dominican and a proposal from Dominican to develop a modern psychiatric facility which would serve both public and private patients.

The skilled nursing care facility

would include 53 beds, the inpatient psychiatric facility would include 30 beds.

Supervisors have not yet decided if they wish Dominican to build the 30-patient psychiatric facility, but Sister Josephine Sullivan, Dominican administrator, has publicly pledged the facility will be built if the county so desires.

Supervisors assert in their response to the grand jury that in the autumn of 1979 Dominican invited both the county and Community Hospital to enter into talks regarding the delicensing of unused medical-surgical beds here. The county "presented this offer to the Board of Supervisors in a regular public meeting and received instructions to participate. Community Hospital declined to enter into discussions."

Supervisors in their response to the grand jury point out that, in effect, the criticized agreement with Dominican will facilitate expansion of Dominican's medical-surgical bed capacity, which is now "100 percent occupied," and provide local residents "with the freedom to choose which hospital they desire to receive treatment."

And, they say, it will also get a skilled nursing care facility if Dominican's expansion application is approved and it is granted the county's 47 licensed medical-surgical beds.

And, if the supervisors so desire, it will get a 30-bed psychiatric facility built here, too.

By Bill Neubauer

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL  
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