

20, 1987

Veterans hall panel named

5-20-87
By STEVE SHENDER

Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — In a move aimed at paving the way for resolution of a long-standing dispute between the county and veterans organizations over the Veterans Memorial Building in Santa Cruz, the Board of Supervisors Tuesday voted to establish a five-member commission to advise the board on the building's management and use. The commission will be composed entirely of veterans who will be appointed by supervisors.

The board also approved the permanent assignment of a second-floor room in the building to the VFW's Bill Motto Post 588 and to the United Veterans Council, and, additionally, the assignment of another second-floor room and the building's "bunker" to the UVC. Another room in the building was permanently assigned to the Disabled American Vets.

The 18-month-old feud between the veterans and the county was touched off by a dispute over office and meeting space. It quickly escalated into a confrontation over who should have ultimate say over the building's operations — the veterans or the county. The building is currently run by the county Parks Department.

United Veterans Council spokesman Ed Muegge told supervisors Tuesday that they should "remove (the Parks Department) from anything to do with the building.

"They're the biggest problem in the building," Muegge said.

Assistant County Counsel Jonathan Wittwer told the board his office had abandoned an attempt to resolve all of the outstanding differences between the county and the veterans in one neat "package." Instead, he said, "The best thing to do now is take a step-by-step approach.

"We need to implement the things we can agree on and attempt to work through the issues we can't reach agreement on," Wittwer said. "Through this, we can build some rapport; we can build some experience in working together."

Still to be resolved, Wittwer indicated, are differences over sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages at the Veterans Building, what kind of security system should be installed there, fees and other charges which should be levied and the disposition of one of the building's ground-floor rooms.

The county and veterans groups — who last year took the county to court — are under pressure from Superior Court Judge Tom Black to settle their dispute over the building. Wittwer, veterans attorney Ray Scott, veterans, board Chairwoman Robley Levy and Black met for 1½ hours in Black's chambers late Monday afternoon to discuss the situation.