

# Board meetings go live on Internet

By **JEANENE HARLICK**  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — County supervisors are going international.

Starting Sept. 10, folks around the world will be able to tune into Board of Supervisors meetings live via the Internet. Audio of the proceedings will be available through the county Web site at [www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us](http://www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us).

"It's just one way for us to be more accessible to the public," said Dinah Phillips, county spokeswoman.

Past meetings will be archived for residents doing research, she added, and Web site visitors will be able to hear the board's previous discussion of a particular item by clicking on an icon posted next to the agenda item. Board meeting agendas already are posted on the county site.

The county will be one of the first in the state to do a live webcast, Phillips said. Orange County and the state Legislature also webcast live.

Access to archived proceedings has been particularly popular in Orange County, said Diane Thomas, county spokeswoman. The county also plans video webcasts, she said.

Santa Cruz County will start its webcast with a year and a half of meetings already archived, Phillips said. That's because the county has been broadcasting board proceedings over its internal Internet system for some time, she said.

Jim Ewert, legal counsel for the California Newspapers and Publishers Association, said the webcasts are an invaluable tool for the public and the press.

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Board of Supervisors

John Werner

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"Being able to tune in and follow along I think most closely parallels what the authors of the Constitution had in mind when they were creating our democratic form of government — citizen participation," he said. "If I were sitting in my house, and there's something I'm really interested in, I could jump in my car and head down (to the board chamber) and tell (supervisors) how I feel."

The new option is the latest in the county's drive to become more tech-savvy. Also next month, residents will be able to e-mail comments on board

e-mailed comment makes it into the public record before Tuesday meetings. Messages have to be received by at least three supervisors before it's officially public record, which is difficult to track.

But in about a month, residents will be able to send in their comments by clicking on an e-mail icon posted next to each agenda item. An electronic form will pop up for people to fill out. Attachments will not be accepted, and must be faxed or mailed in.

All e-mails will then be routed to a shared mailbox open to all staff in the county Clerk's Office. Copies will be printed out and delivered to supervisors, the county administrator, county counsel, and the press.

"The more access people have to our government, the better it works," Ewert said