

Work furlough project is given a reprieve

SANTA CRUZ — The Women's Work Furlough Facility in Ben Lomond has been saved from closure at least until June 30th.

County supervisors this morning unanimously agreed to keep the facility going for the next few months. At the same time, they also voted to start an alternative in-home supervision program March 14 for low-risk, non-violent women prisoners.

In the meantime, County Administrative Officer George Newell is to come up with a less-costly work furlough program for women.

This less-costly program is to be prepared by Newell in time for the 1983-84 budget proceedings this summer.

The board further authorized establishment of a group that will monitor the success of the in-home program over the next year.

Supervisor Gary Patton, who made the motion, said his motion in essence says, "The savings from closing women's work furlough (right now) are not great.

"Let's demonstrate that those 75 percent of the women we put in intensive home supervision can be used in that program now.

"And (let's) direct an appropriate alternative be developed and give the coun-

ty administrative officer maximum latitude to do that which will lower the per person cost, but commits us to provide a work furlough experience for women that is equal to men."

Newell was proposing closure of the facility in Ben Lomond where low-risk, non-violent women prisoners stay on a 24-hour basis. While at the facility, the women are allowed to go to work and/or school and receive extensive counseling.

In its place he was recommending most of these women be sent home or to a friend or relative. At home they would continue to be supervised by the county Probation Department. Such an alternative, Newell said, would save the county \$127,000 next fiscal year.

Newell said 75 percent of the women going through the facility would be eligible for in-home supervision, while 25 percent would be sent to County Jail because judges wouldn't find them eligible to go home.

Many questions were raised by Probation Department employees and citizen Richard Bristow about the figures used by Newell, but Newell stressed the board's vote wasn't a condemnation of his staff's work. He said it resulted from board questions on whether the in-home program would be successful.

