

Food bank may lose backing

By GREG BEEBE
Sentinel staff writer

7-21-93

WATSONVILLE — The door is closing on a key source of food for thousands of hungry people in three counties.

Food and Nutrition Services, operators of the Second Harvest Food Bank in Watsonville for 20 years, was informed Tuesday that it no longer meets a national network's criteria for food distribution to the poor.

The National Second Harvest Food Bank Network in Chicago provides roughly 60 percent of the food distributed by FNS to 80 pantries in Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties.

The network told FNS Tuesday that it has 60 days to meet organizational requirements or lose its contract and a heaping helping of donations.

The rebuff opens the door for Food Bank Services, a rival charity that is starting its own food-for-the-needy program in Watsonville. The challengers claim they can do the job better — and with more community support and less administrative costs — than FNS.

Second Harvest prefers that food banks in its network be separate, stand-alone entities with their own non-profit status. For many years, the FNS food bank, operated under the auspices of the non-profit FNS, has been granted an exemption to that policy.

"The exemption will not be renewed," Second Harvest spokesman Hugh Masterson said Tuesday.

Second Harvest wants FNS to pull its \$650,000-a-year tri-county food bank program out from under a \$7 million umbrella of FNS programs that includes senior meal and transportation services and child care.

Bob Garcia, executive director of FNS, said the board of directors will discuss the Second Harvest decision Monday night "and I anticipate they will appeal. ...

"We've lived up to our side of the contract," said Garcia.

Second Harvest, he said, "made their decision (based) on a lot of incorrect information."

Relations between FNS and the upstart Food Bank Services — which includes former members of

Please see **FOOD** — A6

Food bank

Continued from Page A1

the FNS food bank operating board — have been strained since March, when FNS replaced the board with an advisory group.

Supporters of both factions have lobbied the national Second Harvest office, trading charges.

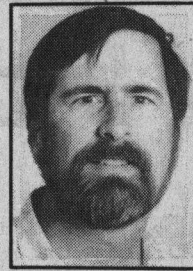
Those with Food Bank Services claims FNS reneged on a promise to let them become independent; FNS charges the challengers pirated FNS accomplishments in their June request for county funding.

Second Harvest declined to renew the exemption for FNS, said Garcia, quoting from the rejection letter from the national organization, because FNS "has not been able to maintain good relations with Food Bank Services." ...

"That's like asking a victim of a crime to maintain good relations with the criminals," said Garcia.

"I don't want to say anything nasty back," said Paul Lapidus, president of the Food Bank Services board.

"We are very pleased that Second Harvest national has recognized that this community merits



Executive director Bob Garcia anticipates FNS will appeal.

an independent food bank," he said.

Second Harvest officials said the presence of a rival food provider had nothing to do with its decision.

"We have no relationship with Food Bank Services," said Masterson. "We don't have an opinion regarding their activity."

Both FNS and Food Bank Services reiterated previous promises that services to the area hungry will not suffer regardless of how sloppy the food fight becomes.

"Our commitment remains making sure as many hungry people as possible get fed," said Garcia.

"The important thing for us is to have no gaps in service whatsoever," said Lapidus.