

# Doctors and patients appeal for

## health center funding

By JUDY BENSON  
Day Staff Writer

New London — Doctors and patients of the Community Health Center told the City Council Monday it should reverse its decision not to give any federal grant funds to the center this year.

"The proposal for eliminating these funds was wrongheaded," said George Spruce, a physician who works at the center part-time. "If there's anything more important — particularly to indigent residents — than health care, I don't know what that is."

'If there's anything more important — particularly to indigent residents — than health care, I don't know what that is.'

Wearing name tags that said "I support the Community Health Center," about 30 patients and center staff and officials attended Monday's council meeting. Ten spoke. Last week, the center sent a flier to its patients urging patients to protest the cuts at Monday's meeting.

Last month, the council voted not to give the center any of the \$110,000 it requested from the Community Development Block Grant Funds for 1995-1996.

The vote came during the council's deliberations on how it would distribute \$1.4 million in federal block grants to various city agencies and programs. Of the total, \$338,000 can be given to public service agencies such as the health center, and the remainder is for other purposes. The council will make its final decisions on the block grants in April, and indicated Monday it will reconsider the health center's request.

1683

THE DAY  
Date: 3/17/95

The center, which took over the city-run public health clinic three years ago, has received \$110,000 in block grant funds for the last three years.

"They help a lot of people in New London," said Frank Badillo, who addressed the council in Spanish as William Garcia, director of Centro de la Comunidad, interpreted. "As they help me and my family, I wish the council would help the center."

Other speakers said they need the health center because their jobs don't provide health insurance, or because they are unemployed.

"I'm a working man but I'm out on workmen's compensation now. I have two children to support by myself," said Cordes Heckendorn. "I'm \$32 over the amount to get Medicaid, but at the Community Health Center I pay on a sliding scale. I go there for me and my children. We need this funding."

Mark Masselli, president and chief executive officer of the center, told the

See FUNDING page B6

## Funding From B1

council that the center expected funds would be cut by 25 or 30 percent, but never anticipated a 100 percent cut.

Councilors told Masselli they needed information on the center's total budget, and he apologized for not providing the information sooner.

Councilors also told Masselli the health center's flier was inflammatory, inciting fears that the center would close because of the \$110,000 cut. The center's total budget is more than 10 times that.

"If I vote any money, it's going to be in spite of this and not because of it," Councilor Walter Watson said. "This flier was very misleading."

Councilor Jane L. Glover added that the center should have made a pitch for block grant funds before the decisions were made, not afterwards. Other agencies that applied for funds did so, she said.

"This is reactionary," she said. "I hate to be forced into a corner. It's very poor management and very poor planning."

p  
s  
a  
f  
r  
I