

Capitola Council opts out of library CSA

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Capitola is considering its own library on the site of a proposed Capitola Mall expansion.

City Council members decided last night to take no action on joining a County Service Area to support library services. Instead, they directed City Manager Steve Burrell to study finances for a 7,000-square-foot library.

Council members said in their objections to joining the CSA that no fee structure has been established, that Capitola has no guarantee any monies

collected in the city would be spent there, and that the county might cut its funding for library services in proportion to the amount of fees raised.

Besides, a tax by any other name is still a tax, Mayor Bob Bucher said.

"I don't think that I as an elected official have the right to add a tax on the people of Capitola."

He also protested projections that a \$7.75 million bond issue would be needed on top of \$1.24 million in annual CSA fees.

"You're going to get into a lot of money here," he told Santa Cruz City-County Library

System Director Anne M. Turner.

The CSA fees would go toward books and materials, Turner explained, while the bond issue would pay construction costs of a central library and branches.

"CSA funds are for operating expenses for new services," she said. "You can't spend CSA funds on capital improvements."

The \$7.75 bond issue is based on establishing neighborhood branches in South County and Live Oak, adding larger branches at Capitola and Felton, improving the Soquel library and doubling the size of the Aptos branch.

Councilman Ron Graves cited recent protests over CSA 38, approved earlier this year to raise money for improved sheriff's department services.

Fees of more than \$2,500 for individual property owners have caused a flap that's sullied the waters politically for joining a library CSA, he said. If Capitola decides to join later, it can apply to the Local Agency Formation Commission.

Service areas are easier to get into than to get out of, City Attorney Richard Manning said. A request for withdrawal would be handled as a normal

application for detachment by LAFCO, with no guarantees it would be granted.

Turner was also unable to give guarantees, since CSA fees are set by the Board of Supervisors. It's beyond her power to promise, she said, "that every penny collected in the city of Capitola will be spent in Capitola."

In opting for building their own branch, Council members agreed to talk with library officials about what type of building is needed once they figure out how to pay for it.

Despite the fact that it wasn't what she'd asked for, Turner

said later she was "delighted" with the Council's decision.

What she's most concerned about, she told the Council, is improving services for library patrons. If a 7,000-square-foot branch is planned for Capitola, a larger branch could be built in Live Oak instead, provided land is available.

Council members made it clear that construction of a library at the Capitola Mall site is contingent upon approval of expansion plans. It would also have to be stocked and staffed by the library system.

Burrell said he would report in January on financing such a library.

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