

Growth

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SC Council Refuses To Place 'Greenbelt' Issue On Ballot

The Santa Cruz City Council Tuesday rejected a bid by the Greenbelt Committee to place an open-space and growth-control initiative on the March 6 ballot.

The rejection came on a 4 to 3 council vote after bitter debate by council members for and against the measure.

However, Greenbelt Committee spokesmen today pledged "We will continue to gather signatures on the Greenbelt initiative petition."

The council received from City Clerk Norma Hislop word that the initiative petition lacked sufficient signatures to be placed on the March 6 ballot.

Councilmembers Bert Muhly, Charlotte Melville and Carole DePalma argued, however, that the committee had been told it needed signatures of only 10 percent of the city's registered voters to qualify the issue for election. They contended that because the city had given the petitioners incorrect information the council should exercise a legal option it has and put question to the people.

But Mayor Larry Edler said there was no way he could exercise that council option unless the committee would agree to take out a bond that would safeguard the city taxpayers against losses if the courts ruled the measure would in effect be inverse condemnation of property.

Ed Borovatz, committee spokesman, said he was not authorized to speak on that subject. Borovatz pressed for the council to let the people decide the whole issue, saying his group could easily have collected signatures from 15 percent of the voters had the group been told this many signatures were needed.

Councilman Joseph Ghio said the question simply was whether the petition as presented complied with requirements. He said it did not and that should settle the matter.

Voting not to put the issue on the March 6 ballot were Ghio, Edler, Spiro Mellis and John Mahaney.

In a press release this morning Borovatz stated on behalf of the committee, "The committee was amazed at the statements of the conservative

members of the city council. They completely missed the issue, which was to grant due process to the petitioners due to the confusion created by their staff in dates and numbers of signatures required. The council members seemed more interested in criticizing the merits of the initiative, patting themselves on the back as eminently wise legislators and implying the voting public, including the over 4,000 signators, were irresponsible. They also seemed indifferent to the additional costs of a special election even when one of their own

members declared that the public voting on this initiative is inevitable."

Councilman Bert Muhly warned the public would insist upon a vote on the issue, that it could and would be brought back in June and that the city will then incur the costs of a special election, with these costs put at over \$30,000.

Borovatz said the committee does not agree with the decision of the council majority to block a vote in March on the issue and that it is determined to see that the voters have a chance to decide if they wish to establish an open-space greenbelt around the city and require a meaningful program to handle future growth.