

Convention Center Pact — Burton Balks

By Wallace Wood
Sentinel Staff Writer

A fight to put the \$2.5-million proposed Lighthouse Point convention center to a "vote of the people" was promised this morning by County Supervisor Robert Burton.

Burton flew in the face of the rest of the Board of Supervisors, who voted to a man otherwise to sign an agreement with the City of Santa Cruz creating a five-man agency to build and run the project, and pledging county money for the center.

"I'm not criticizing the center; I'm criticizing the contract that's before us," Burton told the board. He said he is a "burned dog" who has been scalded by bad contracts before.

Supervisor Vincent Locatelli joined Burton in a motion to have supervisors put the bonds for the center on the ballot. But the motion failed, 3 to 2. Burton, who warned he expected a turnaround, said "the people will secure petitions or there will be a taxpayers' suit on this." He indicated he would lead the opposition himself.

Supervisor Henry Mello, who had just pointed out to Burton a few minutes before that public agencies will have control of the convention center authority, objected that county supervisors have no authority to put the bonds of another agency on the ballot.

Mello was backed by County

Counsel Henry Faitz, though Faitz said he would have to research the matter.

Burton claimed three major things are wrong with the agreement to build the convention center:

- Only two of the five convention center authority members would be "elected representatives," that is, supervisors or councilmen. The other three would be appointed by the county and city. The county would appoint one person and the city two.

- The center authority will become "a completely autonomous entity in government," which does not have to listen to either city or county.

- Revenue bonds to build the center do not have to have voter approval, even though city and county room tax funds will be used to pay off the bonds.

In addition, Burton pointed out that if Proposition 9 on the November ballot passes, the county may be short of property tax money and need the room tax for other uses. The room tax is paid by motel users and short-term renters.

Mello replied to Burton's charges that any action by the center authority requires a four-fifths vote, "so that it will require at least one county man to pass anything." Mello added the center authority "serves at the pleasure of the elected bodies," meaning they could be re-

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Convention Center Joint Powers Pact Approved By Board; Burton Holds Out

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placed at any time under the contract.

Mello said he does not disagree with the idea of a vote on the bonds, but said that "this board faces the necessity of looking to the future . . . we can't put all projects and all improvements before the voters . . . because so many times the electorate does not fully under-

stand and is not fully aware of the need."

In short, Mello said, it's hard to pass revenue bonds.

County councilmen have already signed the joint powers contract. County action today means the center authority can move ahead with hiring architects, applying for federal aid funds, and laying out the machinery for putting the convention center together as soon as all authority

members are named. Chairman Russ McCallie was named as the official county man.

The center will be located on about four acres of land near Lighthouse Point. The land has been donated by developers, who plan a shopping plaza, hotel-motel, and other uses nearby.

Copies of the convention center agreement were not available this morning.

Nixon Hints FBI Warns New Left Is Now