

Bookmobile re-financed

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Libraries to be re-opened

By CAROLYN SWIFT

Santa Cruz Public Library City and County Board of Trustees has ordered a resumption of service for the bookmobile and re-opening of all but one of the branches that were closed after budget cuts last June.

Authorization will include La Selva Beach, Soquel, Garfield Park and the Ben Lomond branches, but will exclude Twin Lakes — the only library branch without a public appeal in its behalf.

Library trustees also mandated that service be equalized throughout the system, and this decision may mean less service at the main library and the branches with higher circulation that were left open after passage of Proposition 13.

The agreement Monday to re-open the branches will not mean an immediate resumption of service, however. Nor does it imply that all the problems of funding the branches have been solved. In fact, technicalities of the action may require some behind-the-scenes dickering between the Santa Cruz city Council and the county Board of supervisors.

It seems that when the city council agreed on reopening the Garfield Branch Library, the necessary \$13,000 was provided by the council above its share of the 85 percent library budget.

This action removed Garfield Library from normal financial procedures and, in a sense, split it from the rest of the library system. The reopening also bypassed the city-county library board which had included Garfield in the order six months ago to close five branches plus the bookmobile.

Santa Cruz Mayor Larry Edler warned the library

board at its Monday morning session that city council members may find it difficult to accept an equalization of that extra \$13,000 throughout the library system. He said the library board has, in effect, decided to reorganize the 85 percent budget already adopted by the city.

But library trustee Leonard Greenberg said he had several reasons for omitting the financial details from his motion to reopen the library branches. His intention, he said, is to reassert the authority of the library board, and to reinstate Garfield Branch as a part of the city-county system.

The majority of the library trustees agrees they believe the city will continue its \$13,000 "grant," for Garfield Library if the county is willing to come up with extra funding worth twice as much — in proportion to its share of costs in the library budget.

Supervisor Dan Forbus told trustees "he thinks" the county can provide the \$26,572 needed to resume service of the bookmobile. And if such an agreement is reached between the city and county, the library system will need to shuffle its budget only to provide staff, services and supplies for Ben Lomond, Soquel and La Selva Beach — a branch that has already received offers of financial help for nearly \$9,000 from the La Selva Beach community.

Greenberg's motion passed with negative votes from two trustees, C. Vernon Berlin and L. Joseph Wilson. The decision was also made against the recommendations of City-County Librarian Charles Atkins.

Atkins said the library branches can be opened through transfers of staff hours from other libraries,

plus a reduction from the book budget. A total of 168 staff hours, the fulltime equivalent of 4.2 positions, are needed to reopen all the branches and the bookmobile. Total estimated costs are \$66,799, including one additional staff member to be hired as library assistant II for the bookmobile.

While Atkins said he has hoped for a resumption of service for the bookmobile, he believes it is a mistake to reopen the smaller libraries because they had low circulations and little real public use. As an example, he said some 70 cards were counted at the Ben Lomond Branch in a period of six weeks. Of the 70, only 24 library cards belonged to returning users. This means that it will cost nearly \$9,000 to run a library branch that serves only two dozen people, Atkins said.

It was Forbus who applied pressure to the library board on a decision. Re-opening of the branch libraries was a recommendation of County Supervisors when they passed the budget over a month ago, he said.

Greenberg made the motion, but said he agreed with the viewpoints of both Atkins and Forbus.

When the board had discussed its long range goals, Greenberg said, the board had decided some of the branches were marginal in service to the public, and an ultimate goal was to close these branches down. Although he is not abandoning that goal, he added, it is important for the library board to take the authority for reopening the libraries, at least until the full impacts of Proposition 13 are known.

Berlin said he believes the action will reduce the level of

service at all the branches just to reopen a few with poor book circulation levels.

Trustee Mary Ann Kaplan said it may be necessary to reduce service at all branches, but then the effects of Proposition 13 will be felt more evenly as well. She pointed out that the patrons of the closed branches had received cuts of 100 percent rather than only 15 percent.

The board directed the city-county library to come back with a report on how to equalize the library system before the branches are reopened. Atkins will present this information at a special board meeting scheduled Nov. 20 at 7:30 p.m. in the conference room.

Equalization plans will be the first topic to be discussed at the board session in two weeks. The second subject involves policy statements and the legal responsibility of both the city and county, as well as authority of the library board.

Both the city and county counsel will be invited to the session, and all documents concerning the joint powers agreement between city and county will be compiled for board review.

During oral communications, Robert Ginsberg

pursued his continuing attempt to convince the library system to use volunteers. He asked the board to initiate a system of volunteer support on a branch-by-branch basis, with a Friends of the Library chapter at each branch, and a system coordinator at the main branch. Volunteers could be recruited and trained locally.

The library board received a copy of a letter written by Bill Hinchliff to the Grand Jury, asking for an investigation of the city-county library system. Hinchliff charges that the system is in a state of deterioration, and was "in a shambles," before passage of Proposition 13. He also charged the Board of Supervisors has given "inadequate attention," to the problems of the libraries.

Lenn Bragg, a member of the Grand Jury, was in attendance at the meeting, and asked a number of questions about the library system's decisions concerning the use of volunteers.

Once again, the library board assured the audience it has an interest in utilizing the support of volunteers, but Greenberg said he hopes the board will act with care to avoid private subsidization of the public library system.

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