



The new Capitola Library might be situated on corner of Clares St. and Wharf Road (near the trees in center of photo).

Photo by Robert J. Airolti

Library coming to Capitola

Libraries 1990-1999

by Robert Airolti

After more than a decade, Capitola has taken a major step toward building a library. By a 4-1 vote, with Councilman Bob Bucher the lone negative vote, the Capitola City Council honored a long overdue promise of building a library in Capitola by approving a library agreement with the County of Santa Cruz.

According to the Capitola Branch Library Agreement between the County of Santa Cruz and the City of Capitola, a 12,500 square-foot library will be constructed on the corner of Clares Street and Wharf Road.

The estimated cost to open is \$2.4 million, split evenly by Capitola and the county. Capitola is donating the land for the project and the county will be responsible for the operating costs of the branch.

The council first heard public testimony on this issue at their January 28 meeting, though they continued the matter until February 11.

At the second meeting about 10 people spoke, roughly half in support of joining the county library system.

Many, however, were adamant against the city going into debt to finance the project. Still others argued that a library is not needed because of the close

proximity to libraries in Aptos and Cabrillo College.

Anthony Bugge said, "In a time of fiscal turmoil and economic uncertainty, an aggressive program to expend public facilities in an attempt to keep a political promise may not be in the best interest of the citizenry of Capitola."

Councilman Mick Routh, who has been working for more than ten years to bring a library to Capitola, said that many things we enjoy in Capitola would not be here if we hadn't gone into debt.

"Sure it's a risk," he said. "But I'm going to support the agreement."

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Library agreement signed

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Major objections to the new library are:

- undertaking debt in a time of fiscal crisis
- lack of faith in the county library system
- participation on the library oversight committee

Those in favor of the agreement have put their trust and faith in the current library system and believe a library is one thing worth going into debt for.

Councilwoman Margaret Fabrizio said, "We need to have vision for the intellectual life of our community." Fabrizio has been a university librarian and believes in the cost-effectiveness of joining a system.

She added, "I think we have the opportunity to get what we want out of this agreement," referring to a seat on the library oversight committee.

Alice Thompson, a Capitola resident and member of the Citizens Library Advisory Committee which advises the Library Oversight Committee, said, "I think people are fairly treated in the system."

Others, however, spoke against spending money and joining the current library system.

Central Fire Board of directors member Anthony Correia said, "We can't afford all the things

we'd like."

Carin Hanna, owner of the Craft Gallery in Capitola, said that Capitola may be going into debt for a building, not for books. "We have books now, they're available," she said, referring to the fact that the county is currently cutting back on materials purchases.

While Director of the Santa Cruz Public Library System Anne Turner said in a letter to the council that she supported the building of a new branch library in Capitola, she seemed to back Hanna's assertion.

Turner's letter stated, "I know that the people of Capitola have a real concern about how the library system will support an additional branch, including supplying materials for it. I do not have an answer to this question. But I do hope and expect that by the time we have the branch built and ready, the economy and the library's funding situation will have improved."

In Milpitas, where the County of Santa Clara and the City of Milpitas have a similar agreement, their library is in trouble. The county cut five hours the branch is open this fiscal year and their library oversight committee is asking the city to

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finance hours previously lost to county budget cuts.

According to Milpitas City Clerk Gail Blalock, "The council approved restoring the five hours per week through June of 1993 at a cost of \$23,200."

According to a San Jose *Mercury News* article dated February 16, Councilman Skip Skyrud, frustrated by the county's whittling away at library services, suggested that Milpitas run the library itself.

Capitola City Treasurer Glenn Hanna, an opponent of the new library agreement, addressed the council voicing his concern.

"Capitola is not immune from financial crisis," Hanna declared. "Capitola is looking at less revenue next year. That is a fact," he added.

According to Hanna, while the county has valued the land at zero dollars in the agreement, they do expect Capitola to back

the land for the debt issue. "This is not a good deal for Capitola," he concluded.

Hanna also provided the council with a Santa Cruz City-County Library System Statistical Review he undertook whose purpose was to examine the administration and operation of the Santa Cruz library system.

His study revealed two major

rowers, and branches, Santa Cruz Library collections per capita are 30 percent below the other systems surveyed, Hanna found.

The current County Library System Long Range Plan states, "The library's collections should be composed of no fewer than three items in all formats (excluding periodicals) per cap-

\$4.70 in personnel for each dollar of material costs for other comparable systems. Santa Cruz County library employees made \$4,884 or 14.6 more per year. The only better paid employees in the sample were those in San Mateo County.

The only councilmember to vote against the project was Bob Bucher. He stated he was not

"Let's do it ourselves and control our own destiny," he exclaimed.

Councilman Jerry Clarke said, "A library of this nature would be used significantly by those who need it most."

Resident Nels Westamn said, "I urge you to go ahead and proceed with this. Don't be spooked by the overwhelming litany of negativity."

In the end, the council decided to honor their promise of providing Capitols with a library.

The next step, according to Capitola City Manager Steve Burrell is for members of the city council to attend the Library Oversight Committee meeting on March 1. There, they will discuss forming a committee that includes members of the county, City of Capitola, library officials, and members of the public. This committee will oversee steps taken to facilitate the planning process and construction of the new library.

"I urge you to go ahead and proceed with this. Don't be spooked by the overwhelming litany of negativity."

- Capitola resident Nels Westman

areas of concern:

- underfunding of books and materials
- higher than average personnel costs

When compared with five similar county library systems (Alameda, San Mateo, Solano, Napa, and Marin) in terms of square miles, population, bor-

ita of the total service area." According to Hanna's review our system is currently at 1.63 volumes per capita.

Regarding personnel costs, Hanna's survey revealed some disturbing trends. The county spends \$6.70 on personnel for each dollar of materials. This compares with an average of

concerned with going into debt, but with the agreement itself. If passed, he said, it would be the first time something will be built in Capitola we won't have total control over.

Bucher received a rousing ovation when he suggested that Capitola put the question on the ballot to let the people decide.