

Watsonville Airport Manager Backs Sky Park Landing Field

By Jack Ranniells

Vernon Ackerman, Watsonville airport manager, feels Santa Cruz county needs two airports.

"The county should have two airports—one major like ours and the other of the category that you have in Santa Cruz," he said last night at the quarterly meeting of county supervisors and city councilmen.

Although Ackerman's remarks were primarily an appeal for county support of the south-county airport, they may have had a bolstering effect for proposed city-county purchase of Sky Park airport in Scotts Valley.

The state aeronautics commission has been requested by the local agencies to outline steps necessary for transfer of the Sky Park airport permit.

Neither the county nor the city is committed to actual purchase.

Pointing out that mountainous terrain around Santa Cruz makes development of an instrument or night flying improbable, Ackerman cited the significance of even a restricted field to accommodate tourists and businessmen.

"Any airport that you lose is a step backwards," he said.

Santa Cruz Councilman John McBain pointed out that the airport commission has no intentions for a major airport at Sky Park.

Lewis Nelson, chairman of the board of supervisors, appealed for support of both airports.

"The board is not in a position of favoring either one. If we're going to develop a balanced economy in Santa Cruz county, we're going to have to support these airports," Nelson said.

He also urged support of the county planning commission in attempts to protect the airports.

Robert Burton and Hulda McLean, other supervisors present, did not comment.

Ackerman said income generally falls about \$4000 short of the \$15,000 annual airport budget. This is made up from the city's fund.

He indicated that county support is needed for a new administration building, estimated at \$35,000. More than \$11,000 is on hand.

Land already has been purchased which can be used to expand the main landing strip from 4500 to 6000 feet to handle all but the largest passenger planes, Ackerman said.

He said most of the 48 permanently based planes and airport users are not Watsonville residents.

In other discussion, Watsonville spokesmen showed increased interest in participation in a countywide library district.

Watsonville Librarian Elizabeth Collins said her system is on the verge of change and wants to be a part of current discussions on modification of the existing Santa Cruz city-county library system.

Watsonville Mayor Fred Flodberg noted "firmly entrenched local control" but indicated a county-wide system might be possible if this was respected and service was increased.

Nelson urged the council groups to "forget this north-south razz-metazz."

"Libraries are on field we can handle on a countywide basis to everybody's benefit. We better pool our resources for the best

service for the last amount of money," he said.

He said efforts of Soquel, Twin Lakes and Boulder Creek residents to provide better local library building is precedent which should be followed by other areas. Aptos is thinking in this direction, he said.

Construction of new basic facilities in Santa Cruz and Watsonville "is going to be for the overall good of the county," Nelson said.

Mrs. McLean agreed on desirability of a countywide system but said she feels changes should not wait on Watsonville if officials there are not convinced.

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