

Commissioner Walters Expresses...

# Mixed Feelings About Coast Commission

Norman Walters, former Santa Cruz mayor, opposed the coastal initiative (Proposition 20) in 1972 which created the state and regional coastal commissions. Walters today still finds himself critical of the initiative, even though he's now a commission member.

The Santa Cruz representative on the Central Coast Regional Commission told members of the San Lorenzo Valley Republican Women, Federated about his feelings on the coastal commission - past, present and future.

He said he was surprised in 1972 when he, an open opponent of Proposition 20, was approached and asked if he wanted to be serve on the local commission.

He accepted, but believed he wouldn't be chosen because of his views and because he was a registered Republican. He ended up being appointed by California Sen. James Mills, a Democrat, in 1973.

Walters opposed Proposition 20 because of its content, not its intent. He said the proposition method "is overused and the least efficient manner of legislation in the state" because the content of initiatives end up supporting a biased viewpoint.

As the commission has labored through the years under the provisions of the coastal initiative, Walters believes supporters of the measure may be changing their tune.

He pointed out that Rep. Robert Nimmo, R-17th District, has requested a hearing on the central coast because of criticism over how the commission operates. He also quoted from a Salinas newspaper editorial that Prop. 20 was theoretically sound, but in practicality "it stinks."

Walters himself criticizes the Central Coast Commission for getting involved in local matters that have no statewide effect. He said that since the initiative was passed by voters

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throughout the state, only matters significance to the entire state should be considered.

Because of this viewpoint, Walters finds himself the minority member on the board in many cases.

He claimed the commission "has become a backboard from which dissidents in local situations have used to get what they want. They come arguing local factors when the commission's concern should be statewide."

A specific incident, Walters said, was when the commission turned down a permit for a development near the yacht harbor because of traffic problems above the harbor. He said traffic congestion was a local

problem and not a state concern.

In a different case, Walters said development around the ecologically-fragile Elkhorn Slough should be controlled by the Central Coast Commission because the slough is one of two such areas in California and its protection is vital to the entire state.

"It's sometimes difficult to follow the law and at the same time protect the (property and development) rights of the individual," Walters stated.

He said the commission often is criticized for holding back development, but said that 90 percent of all permit requests are granted with about 70 percent automatically approved on the consent agenda.

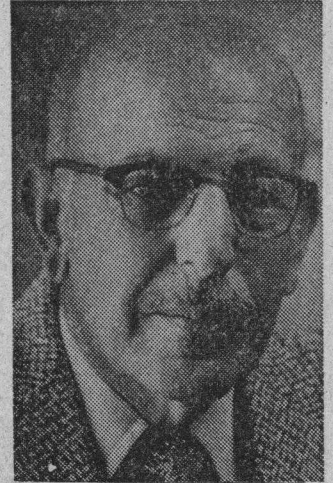
"The ones that are rejected are the controversial matters that have a great impact on the community."

The commissioner held up the voluminous coastal plan put together by the state Coastal Commission with input from the local commissions. The plan has more than 400 pages and 163 policies.

Out of this plan, the state came up with a much more general law for the coast - 37 pages and with only 14 policies.

The control of the coastlands is meant to return to the hands of the local communities in two years. Local governmental agencies will have to come up with a local coastal plan to conform to these state guidelines.

The Central Coast Regional Commission and other local commissions then will go out of business, but Walters believes it will be always necessary to have a state commission.



Norman Walters

"While I opposed Proposition 20 and its initial presentation . . . I feel we've made positive steps," Walter said. "Through much hard work, out of this is going to come a plan that will protect our natural resources."

We stopped to buy nase berries, large, walnut-sized fruit with the flavor of figs. I was introduced to sweet sops, a weird looking fruit shaped like the artichoke, but covered with knobs. Inside the flesh is —well, flavored somewhere

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