

# Capitola: A Civilized City?

## Not Without Books, Some Say

by Mark Adams

**T**he recipe for a city is simple: First, build City Hall, this way your leaders can meet publicly. Then, construct roadways. Add a fire station, police station, city parking lots—a wharf—schools and churches. Zone certain areas for housing and retail. Sprinkle parks and recreational centers here and there. And, presto, you've got a....wait!

How about a library?

"I really think it is important," said city Council Member Margaret Fabrizio in an interview recently. "Libraries are a sign of civilization. It is the city's responsibility to have a library."

The Capitola City Council is currently mulling over a possible agreement with the county to build a 12,000-square-foot library on city-owned property at Clares and Wharf Road.

The original Capitola branch was closed in 1982.

But the deal would require the city to fork over \$1.2 million for construction of the new library (half the cost), and this, in the age of a recession, has sparked a some debate over the cost of "civilization." Approval of the agreement would increase the city's debt service by some \$90,000 a year, according to City Manager Steve Burrell.

### The Public Hearings

During a council meeting January 28, residents and city leaders examined the proposed agreement, which the county signed in December 1992. Support for the library was overwhelming. But the price tag and type of library was a point of contention.

"I don't think we have the money," argued Council Member Bob Bucher. And, he added: "We have never had an agreement with the county that has worked...You have to be dreaming that this is a reality."

Bucher, though not opposed to libraries, suggested the city should let voters decide whether building a library is worth going into debt for. A special election for former-Representative Leon Panetta's seat would be the appropriate time to send the matter to voters, Bucher said.

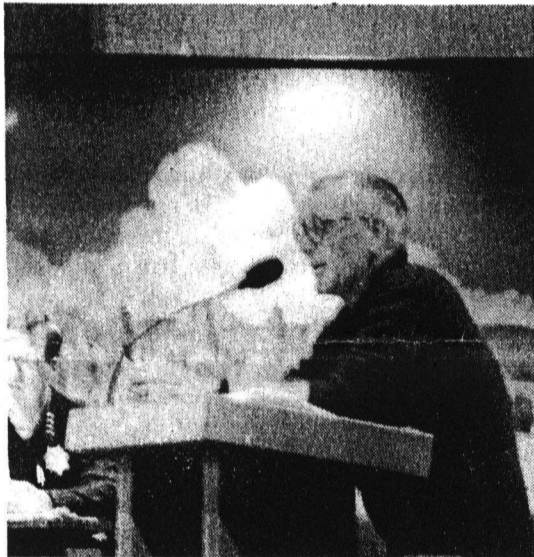
Since 1982, residents have turned to Aptos and Santa Cruz City branches for books and services. (Children also use the

Live Oak library.) These branches are run through a joint venture of the city and county of Santa Cruz, dating back to 1917.

Under the proposed agreement, the new Capitola branch would be operated by the library system, while the city would design and maintain the exterior. A letter of intent supporting the agreement was approved by the council last year.

"Libraries are the one thing I don't mind going into debt for," Fabrizio told her fellow council members during the meeting. "We need to make a decision for the community."

Council Member Mick Routh



Glenn Hanna

also voiced support for the agreement. "It is a library and it is better than what we have now," he said.

And Council Member Jerry Clarke noted: "I don't really have a problem with the basic agreement. I think this is a vision that began a decade ago; that we are at the threshold; and we need to press forward."

### Concerns Heard

Some members of the community were not supportive of the deal. Glenn Hanna, who noted he was speaking as a resident and not as the city's treasurer, voiced concern over the type of library being proposed. Hanna has been critical operations in the library system in the past.

"I believe in libraries, but I'm not sure a bookless library serves us," he said, charging that the library system was bloated with bureaucrats more interested in reference services than with books. He said the system's selection of new materials is dismal.

According to library officials, the system's book buying has been hampered by the recession. Addi-

tionally, funding for books during the first part of fiscal 1993 was frozen. The 1991-92 Grand Jury also found that some funds for new books were never spent during fiscal 1992.

Hanna called the system a bad deal for Capitola. Furthermore, he objected to the proposed agreement because the city would have no voice in future procurements of books for the Capitola branch.

"I don't think it is a wise idea to allow the City of Santa Cruz to dictate the needs of our community," he said. Hanna added that the plan would produce a "generic library run by our neighbor,...a politically controlled library system."

Mayor Ron Graves sided with Hanna and said the agreement should be rewritten to address those concerns. "He is absolutely correct," Graves said in regards to the system's selection of books. Graves said he would not support the agreement as it is written.

### Hammering Out a Deal

While the meeting was sometimes contentious, the council decided to continue public discussion on the library agreement on February 11. In the meantime, the council directed the city manager to examine the library system's book purchasing policy.

The council also asked the city manager to explore the possibility of getting representation on the library system's oversight committee. Currently, it is made up of two Santa Cruz City officials, two county officials and one community member.

"As it stands right now, we have no rights in [the way libraries are run]," Fabrizio explained with some concern.

These two issues—book selection and representation—seem key to approval of the library agreement. Then again, the city may also decide to simply "buy into" the present system.

Fabrizio said the city stands to gain much by approving an agreement similar to the one on the table. "I think it is very critical," she said. "I'm not sure that without substantial fund raising for many years that we would be able to raise the money to run [a library] privately. ...We can't run this free of cost." □