

UPDATES

Supes Reinstate Spending Ordinance

With egg on their faces, the board of supervisors this week reinstated the controversial campaign contribution ordinance, but not without disappointing the hopes of many county residents who wished to see the issue resolved at the polls.

The order to "repeal the repeal" came from the county's legal counsel after it was discovered the March 13 vote rescinding the \$100 cap on candidate contributions could jeopardize the ongoing grand jury investigation into last spring's recall election by absolving possible violators of the spending limit.

The move to reinstate the measure came from Dan Forbus last week, who admitted the possibility of suspending prosecution "evidently escaped our entire legal community." But a final vote on the matter was delayed by Gary Patton and Chris Matthews, heeding the request of Citizens for Clean Elections (CCE), who in three weeks gathered more than 10,000 petition signatures demanding either a board vote for reinstatement or, preferably, a countywide ballot vote.

In urging a constituent vote on the spending limit, CCE spokesperson Robley Levy told the board, "Certain board members have made it clear that they intend to play ping pong with this issue and repeal it again at a later date."

CCE's hopes met with defeat this week as the board refused further requests by Matthews and Patton for continuance. By next week CCE would have been able to come up with the necessary 6650 validated signatures from the 10,000 gathered, thus assuring a referendum.

Instead, the conservative majority, along with a grudging Patton and Matthews, voted simply to reinstate the original ordinance. Said Marilyn Liddicoat, "I'm willing to support this — I don't want to be accused of interfering with the grand jury's inquisition."

Liddicoat nonetheless maintained the \$100 limit, a local law put on the books in 1976, was unconstitutional and made criminals out of innocent people. Saying, "People use this type of law to intimidate and harass candidates and donors involved in campaigns." Liddicoat defended out-of-county property owners who contributed a great deal of money to June's recall by likening them to the Boston Tea Partyers who rebelled against "taxation without representation."

Liddicoat also questioned CCE for demanding a spending limit in county election campaigns but not for other local political races. Accusing Levy of thinking "only supervisors can be bought and sold," Liddicoat suggested "since Santa Cruz city voters did most of the signing anyway," anyone concerned about corruption should seek city ordinances with the same intent.

Chris Matthews objected to Liddicoat's allegation that "this is just a North County conspiracy," and said support for the spending limit was strong in his Pajaro district.

In presenting various legal alternatives to the board, County Counsel Clair Carlson urged the supervisors to add a "saving clause" to the reinstated ordinance which

ensures investigation and prosecution of overspenders even in the face of later repeal.

CCE coordinator Tim Jenkins called the intention of repeal "capricious behavior that circumvents the will of the many thousands of citizens who signed these petitions." □

Is It a Bridge Too Far-Fetched?

Is there another San Lorenzo River bridge looming in the city's future? The 1990 Santa Cruz General Plan calls for an Ocean Street bridge, although the 1978-83 Capital Improvements Program doesn't. City planners have pushed for construction of the bridge, and it is emerging as an object of controversy among residents of the Beach Flats area, which is where the bridge would funnel traffic.

It was hot in the lobby of the Casa Alta Hotel Apartments on Beach Street as city planners and members of the Beach Flats Neighbors met recently to discuss how to spend \$663,000 of federal Housing and Community Development grant money on the Beach Flats over the next three years.

Hotter than the temperature seemed to be the topic of a bridge at the end of Ocean Street. The fear was the HCD improvements would be wrecked by the bridge.

"Why put lights in here? Why waste the money?" asked one irate citizen.

"It doesn't make any sense to make a bunch of improvements in the area and then run a bridge through here in five years which will knock them all down," agreed city planner Larry Pearson.

Suspensions remained, however, as none of the city residents — who said for years they've listened to the city's plans for their neighborhood and watched as nothing happened — emphasized that they weren't thrilled with the prospect of the bridge. Aside from balking at the perhaps-prohibitive cost (the city estimates \$2 million), neighbors were wary of the bridge accomplishing much good.

It may clear up the bottleneck caused by summer tourist traffic, but wouldn't dent the massive traffic jams which occur further up Ocean Street around the Soquel Avenue intersection, said one person who lives near the intersection.

The Seaside Company, which owns the boardwalk, says it has its doubts as to whether the bridge is necessary.

Beach Flats residents seem to want the city to put a park, a community center and better housing in the Beach Flats, although the true sentiments of the neighborhood will not be known for several weeks until a bilingual questionnaire is passed around the area and results are tabulated. □