

# Sentinel

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THIRTY-EIGHT PAGES

# Courthouse Goes Ahead Over Complaints

By Wallace Wood  
Sentinel Staff Writer

County supervisors this morning sent their \$5.25-million courthouse complex on its way to construction, ignoring desperate attempts by judges and the county bar association to revamp the "cell block" project.

The attorneys and judges did win changes in design of the single-story courts building, and a switch of the county clerk's office and law library to the first floor of the five-story office building.

But the board of supervisors, with Robert Burton dissenting, frustrated efforts to have the entire courthouse redesigned.

"This building will be obsolete before it is constructed, when you consider it has to last for 75 or 100 years," Superior Court Judge Gilbert Perry warned the board.

Both superior and municipal court judges and the county bar association suddenly switched from approval of the courts to determined opposition after final plans were approved and

the project put to bid two weeks ago.

Rockwell told the board that a major redesign would cost \$400,000 or more in fees and increased construction prices, and would mean a delay of seven to nine months on the project.

While admitting that the redesigned courts would be adequate "for the next 10 years or so," bar association representative Ronald Dunton charges that the building is "too crowded, too full of little hallways and little rooms. The concept of an envelope of air is too costly in terms of space." Dunton also pointed out that neither courtrooms, judges chambers, conference rooms or court reporter's rooms will have windows.

"They will be cells for sentencing judges to life imprisonment, no, several lives, because the building will last so long," he declared.

The appeal for a complete redesign came yesterday afternoon at a secret meeting of the bar association. Rockwell was told of the change during an evening meeting to clear up final details on the courthouse.

Board Chairman Russ McCallie noted dryly that both the bar association and judges had approved the plans once several months ago. "Those documents are on file," he added.

Judge Charles Franich admit-

ted that "it was our fault in not bringing this up earlier. But this seems to be a kind of plague in our county."

Even if the redesign meant a great increase in cost, the judges declared it should be done "before the error is perpetuated in concrete," as Judge Perry put it.

"It makes more common sense to change it right now and have a couple of months delay and a few thousand more dollars, and get what we want," Municipal Court Judge James Scopettone told the board.

But there would be no such thing as a couple of months delay, Rockwell said, if any major changes were made.

Supervisor Francis Silliman finally broke the ice in moving for approval of the minor changes the judges and attorneys had suggested earlier.

"It is unfortunate that there is always conflict between the judiciary and supervisors on every courthouse complex I know," he said. "You're never going to get complete unanimity on the proper design for a courthouse."

Supervisor Thomas Black, warned he had "put on his supervisor hat," even though he was an attorney, and seconded Silliman's motion.

Burton, however, held out for redesign suggested by the bar and bench.

## Churchill Lying