

Energy report still sparks controversy

By GREG GARRY
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A report by Energy Future of Santa Cruz, called "A Citizen's Plan for Energy Self Reliance," continues to spark exhaustive debate — pro and con.

The 100-page-plan, which was released last June, can reduce energy use in the county by up to 35 percent, says John Cohn, director of the project.

But Doug McConnell, chairman of the local government study committee, part of Associates of Good Government, and Bob McKenzie, former president of the Aptos Chamber of Commerce, view the plan as an invasion by government into the private sector.

The county Board of Supervisors, at its Oct. 26 meeting, unanimously agreed to delay taking any action on the recommendations contained in the plan until various county departments analyze it.

The plan includes recommendations for residential, transportation, agricultural, business, government energy use, as well as education, economic development and local energy.

Among the 135 recommendations in the plan are calls for increased use of bicycles, buses, and rail transit, improved energy efficiency for homes, alternative forms of energy such as solar, wood fuel, wind energy, and numerous other recommendations.

McConnell argues that the plan is the pet project of a select group of people. "We are convinced that the Energy Future group does not represent the entire county," says McConnell.

Adds McKenzie, "To the best of my knowledge the Santa Cruz area Chamber of Commerce was not asked to participate in the plan."

McConnell says he was taken by surprise

when he first learned of the plan. "It wasn't until September that we had any inkling of what was going on,"

Cohn denies all of this. "For these guys to say that they didn't know what we were up to is incorrect," says Cohn.

He says that about 18 months ago Energy Future sent letters to community organizations, including the Aptos Chamber of Commerce and the Council of Improvement Associations.

Cohn also maintains that Energy Future had an outreach coordinator whose job it was to go out into the community to make people aware of the plan. He also says that 75 neighborhood meetings were held throughout the county beginning in March of 1981.

"Any well-informed citizen that is involved with community organizations should have been informed about Energy Future if not by direct contact then through the media," says Cohn.

McConnell and McKenzie argue that Energy Future also ignored certain members of the community in formulating its plan. "These people have presented a fairly grandiose plan without really considering the moderate or conservative members of the community," says McKenzie.

Cohn says this is not true. "It is impossible for any group to represent the entire county. However, I believe that Energy Future Santa Cruz made every possible effort to get a broad spectrum of community input into the process of putting together the plan. This was typified by the nature of the advisory board."

He says advisory board members were selected by area of expertise not by liberal or conservative bent. Cohn also says the selection criteria for recommendations in the plan considered such things as:

- Can it be done with current technology?
- Does it have a net energy savings?
- Will the economic benefits outweigh the costs?
- Can it be implemented without destroying the environment?

Another argument by McConnell and McKenzie against the plan is connected to oil consumption. McConnell, who worked for Exxon in its Middle East department for 20 years, says that his figures indicate oil consumption has gone down considerably since 1979.

McConnell also says that 51 percent of U.S. oil imports are from non-OPEC nations anyway (1981-82). He argues that reduced consumption should tell consumers that they shouldn't be worried, and points to Exxon's abandonment of its oil shale project as proof.

Cohn says, "We have never said it is a crisis of supply. It is an economic crisis and a local economic crisis. I won't dispute that there is plenty of oil out there but it is expensive."

McConnell and McKenzie also object to the county getting involved in mandating some of the recommendations. "Their attitude of 'you will do this because it is good for you' that cuts me to the marrow of my bones," says McKenzie.

"The way they read, the Energy Future plan is a series of mandates and that is not true," says Cohn. In most cases, he says, the language specifically states "local government should permit."

In nature, adds Cohn, the plan is basically a series of recommendations. "The energy Future plan is exactly what it says it is — a plan." Whether the plan becomes a mandate is up to local government, according to Cohn.

McConnell and McKenzie both want a blue ribbon commission made up of moderate and conservative members of the community to further analyze the plan.