



You can tell from the bricks, workers and scaffolding that the Town Clock — scheduled for completion July 4 —

will not be your normal timepiece. (Sentinel Photo by Bill Lovejoy)

The Old Town Clock Gets Attention, Controversy

By TOM HONIG
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There are few newspaper stories written about a clock — especially one that hasn't been placed yet in its new home.

Also, most clocks don't elicit public comment, bring in nearly \$27,000 in public donations — or incur the wrath of a minority of city council members.

But the Santa Cruz Town Clock is not your normal timepiece. The tower which will support the clock is now being erected across Water Street from Pacific Avenue Garden Mall.

The clock itself is not new: for 65 years it stood atop the old IOOF building on Pacific Avenue, but it was dismantled in 1964 when the building was renovated.

But all sorts of interesting things happen when a country closes in on its bicentennial year, and the renovation of the town clock was one of them.

The clock restoration became an official project of Santa Cruz City's Citizen's Committee on Community Improvement, and with the support of the council, the committee went to work to build a tower for the clock with a target date of July 4, 1976.

The city council gave about \$25,000 to the project early this year, leaving about \$67,000 to be raised by donations.

But then, in April, the council gave a financial boost to the clock again by coming up with a \$50,000 no-interest loan so work could continue speedily on the project. In case

donations fell short, the loan would be applied to paying off the project.

That loan edged the project into some controversy, and two city councilmembers came out against the loan.

Councilman Joe Ghio joined cohort Bert Muhly in opposing the project. Ghio said proponents of the clock felt that the city council had a moral obligation to fund the project because the council had earlier voted to support it.

"There was no obligation on the part of the council to financially support it past the \$25,000" the city had given the clock earlier in the year, Ghio said.

"I made it clear that I don't see the moral obligation to dip into city funds needed for other projects in the city for a clock."

Ghio said there is "no way" that contributions can make up the \$50,000 the city loaned the town clock fund. "We have to be realistic; I can't see any way they'll get anywhere near the goal."

The goal for contributions from the public is \$60,000. In mid-April, when city council okayed the \$50,000 loan, contributions had reached \$21,000. Currently, about \$27,000 has been collected.

After the council granted the loan, Ghio said, "there is no impetus for people to donate money."

Bob Darrow, the prime moving force behind the clock, sees the whole affair differently.

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Town Clock Project

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"The critics of the project are getting fewer and fewer as the clock progresses. They never bothered me anyway. The overwhelming response has been favorable for the project."

He said the end result of having the town clock re-installed in Santa Cruz will give the town "a focal point and an artistically-pleasing structure with a utility use as well as providing a symbol for the City of Santa Cruz."

He described proudly the progress of the project, as well as saying that the final cost will be almost exactly what he predicted more than a year ago: \$89,000.

Cynthia Mathews, who has worked along with Darrow on the project as public relations director, echoed Darrow's remarks about the desirability of having the clock as a town symbol because "a community should exist above a subsistence level."

Work on the clock continues, and Darrow is still hoping for a completion date of July 4. He said a vault will be sunk at the project, and the committee is asking for ideas about what to include in it.

Donations are also still needed, Darrow said.

Anyone wishing to donate to the project may do so by contacting Dorothy Trinidad of the city finance department, 426-5000.