

House Vote

Petition Seeks Bond Election

By Ken Klempnauer
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Supervisor Robert Burton has launched an independent initiative petition campaign to force the board of supervisors to place a \$4-million courthouse construction bond issue on the November ballot.

Acting without the prior knowledge of his fellow supervisors and without their advice and support, Burton instigated the initiative crusade with county resident Lowell West.

Burton, who said he tried a year and a half to get the board to put a courthouse bond on the ballot, told The Sentinel last night, "If I can't get it one way, I'll get it another."

The Burton-West team was successful in the 1962 general election in promoting the so-called "courthouse first" priority proposition that junked construction of a new juvenile hall until a courthouse is built, using county building fund money.

Burton's newest move brought cries of foul play from three supervisors, who all said they learned of the petition only Friday evening. Only Supervisor Vince Locatelli refused to offer comment one way or another on Burton's action.

Said Board Chairman Russ McCallie, "This is a free country. If he (Burton) wishes to circulate a petition, that's his business. But it's not my method of operation."

"The board is somewhat like the electorate: the majority rules. I've heard Mr. Burton say he will abide by the majority, but this doesn't seem to be the case."

Although they haven't committed themselves to any financing scheme for the courthouse, supervisors have voted to investigate a lease purchase method. Burton has voted against lease purchase. The board tomorrow will meet in closed session to discuss three lease purchase proposals received so far.

Supervisor Francis Silliman termed Burton's latest plan a "bunch of boloney."

"We had promises from them (Burton and West) that juvenile hall would be taken care of but nothing has happened," Silliman said, referring to the 1962 courthouse-first issue.

Supervisor Lewis Nelson called the petition "purely and simply an obstructionist viewpoint."

All three joined in stating that a bond issue has little chance to succeed as it would require a two-thirds' majority vote to pass. And a losing bond issue would cost the taxpayers thousands of dollars and cause additional delays in courthouse construction, they said.

But Burton has other thoughts.

"I'm sure a bond issue will pass or I wouldn't go into it," he said. "The supervisors can still go into lease purchase if it loses. There will be no delay in any way."

He said he did not seek counsel of his fellow supervisors before making his decision to launch the initiative drive.

Petitions will start circulating in 21 days, a period required by law after legal notice appears in today's edition of The Sentinel on the intention to circulate the petition.

The petition needs signatures of 10 per cent of the electorate who voted in Santa Cruz county for all candidates for governor in 1962 in order to be put on the ballot. The total number of signatures required is 3912, according to the county clerk's office.

Supervisor Locatelli's lone comment on the petition is that he has "no doubt" that sufficient number of signatures will be obtained.

Supervisor Silliman said he will seek County Counsel Bill Card's opinion as to the legality of the petition. Silliman said he

believes the question of courthouse financing is an administrative decision to be made by the board, and that the board would not be bound by a petition.

But McCallie's and Silliman gravest concern is the problem they contend would result in obtaining lease purchase financing if a bond issue fails.

McCallie said if the bond issue doesn't get 50 to 60 per cent in favor, it would "be detrimental to a favorable interest rate on lease purchase."

McCallie explained that the board is attempting to get an interest rate in the neighborhood of 3½ per cent on lease purchase. Financial consultants have told him that a losing bond issue might boost lease purchase interest rates to 4.5 per cent, which "over a 20-year period would" \$1 million or more in additional interest.

He added that a losing bond issue also would stall the building program another "year or two" and, with the approximately 5 per cent annual increase in construction costs, a delay would add "another \$250,000 to \$300,000."

Furthermore, Burton's action has placed his fellow supervisors in an awkward position. All of them agree that a bond issue is the best method of financing the courthouse but have doubts a bond issue would pass. However, if it is put on the ballot by the supervisors, although they haven't said they will support it, they would be forced to back a bond issue for two reasons:

First, it has been called the best financing method, if it passes.

Second, it would have to get a large favorable vote to assure a favorable lease purchase interest rate, if it fails.

SV School Bond Vote

Voters in the Scotts Valley Elementary school district will go to the polls September 15 to decide the fate of a \$350,000 building proposal.

District trustees Friday afternoon called for a \$100,000 bond issue and a \$250,000 state aid loan for the special September ballot.

The money would be used to finance construction of four new classrooms at Vine Hill school and eight new classrooms at Brook Knoll school.

Board President Philips Patton said the district's bond redemption tax rate this fiscal year is at 40 cents. Because the district is on the state aid program, the tax rate will hold at this amount even with the additional bond issue and loan.

In other business, the board instructed its representative to the county committee on school district organization against a proposed plan for the Santa Cruz school district and its elementary districts, scheduled July 20.