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Burton Threatens Taxpayers' Suit Against URA Park Project

By John Wheeler

The city may face a taxpayers' suit on its financing of the urban redevelopment agency's San Lorenzo park project, it was disclosed today.

The suit would grow out of objections raised by long-time URA foe, Councilman Robert Burton, unless the city changes its contract with the state for the estimated \$51,000 local share of the project's net cost.

The contract, which was approved by the attorney general's office, the state department of finance and then City Attorney Lester Burns, approved a \$130,000 loan to the city backed by the title to the city's recreation park inside the redevelopment project.

Part of the loan money was to go toward paying for the park and part for underwriting the city's share of the \$3.7 million 81-acre project.

Challengers of the contract argue that the city cannot stretch out the payments of the loan over a number of years since this would obligate future councils to make payments in opposition to state supreme court rulings.

Should a future council fail to make the \$13,000 annual payment, the city could lose title of its park, it was contended.

According to Burton, he will ask Mayor Adrian Jensen in council meeting tonight what progress has been made toward changing the contract and making it acceptable.

The senior councilman said this morning, "Five taxpayers are prepared to take this matter to court through Attorney Jim Boone if it is not changed."

Burton declined to name the five persons who have agreed to institute the taxpayers' suit.

City hall officials are confident something can be worked out to prevent the suit and put the contract into legally workable

form should anything be out of order.

City Attorney John Barber, URA Attorney Lewis Yapp and Boone conferred on the contract recently. Earlier, Burton, Jensen and Boone held a briefing session.

According to URA Director Olin Carl White, the city attorney and URA attorney have not determined anything is really out of order.

"In the meantime, we must assume it is all right since it was reviewed by so many agencies and authorities before it was approved," White said.

"If anything is wrong, we are just as eager as anyone to see the contract changed. We entered into it with good intentions and our intentions are still the same."

Opponents of the contract informally have indicated action will come within a couple of weeks if the contract is not scheduled for change and if the document still seems in conflict with the state constitution.

One possible out for the city could be URA's application for an amended master plan and for a re-evaluation of financing of the project. According to the new figures, the city's share of the net loss will be zero because of such non-cash credits as levee construction, new bridges and the like which will increase the value of property in the project.

Fair Board Elects New Officers

New officers for the Santa Cruz County Fair board were elected last night at the fair grounds on Hecker Pass road.

They are Carl Bosworth of Watsonville, president; Fred McPherson Jr. of Santa Cruz, vice president; George Covell, Wat-

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