

Supervisors Again Discuss 'Courthouse Of Conflict'

Dubbed the "courthouse of conflict," the county's crisis-ridden \$5.25 million governmental center will be back before the board of supervisors tomorrow.

The proposed courthouse skirted the edges of disastrous delays and possible legal actions Friday when the county Bar association voted not to ask for a complete scrapping of plans for the courts building.

If final—or nearly final—plan changes can be worked out with architect Burton Rockwell, supervisors may order the changes made part of the design and notify bidders.

The bar did not wholly approve architect Burton Rockwell's newest and most changed interior plan for conference rooms, jury rooms, judge's chambers, law library, evidence rooms and the like.

Attorneys and judges both said they still want to change things a bit more, and keep their eye on redecoration.

"We've got 80 per cent of what we want, and that's more than I could expect in most things," attorney Bud Wyckoff said in his motion for basic approval of the plan.

If the minor changes cannot be worked out by Monday, it will mean another week's delay in sending altered plans to contractors, and possibly delay in construction.

At the moment, however, another minor crisis is holding up the bid awards for the \$5.25 million five-story office building and single-story courthouse. Federal government officials, who will contribute about \$300,000 for a civil defense operating center in the basement of the office building, have yet to approve the county's wage scale for construction workers.

"What's holding this up, I don't know, but we have asked for emergency action to clear

the prevailing wage scale," Supervisor Francis Silliman said Friday.

A total of 60 days must elapse between approval of the wage scale and award of the bids.

Moves to reject the new changes and start a series of legal maneuvers to delay or force changes in the project failed to gain much support from attorneys at Friday's meeting.

Superior Court Judge Charles Francis and attorney Ronald Dunton told the bar that "these changes are about the most we can expect from the architect."

Many attorneys objected to the basic building design, which calls for a central core of six courtrooms to be surrounded by a glass "air envelope" to provide insulation. They charged that square courtrooms should be rectangular and the glass-enclosed corridor seemed to be wasting needed space inside the core.

Dunton explained that "for esthetic reasons and good engineering reasons, the architect just will not change this basic design."

He explained that Rockwell met our "practical objections" by redesigning the interior core for added conference rooms and a law library, as well as placing the county clerk's office on the first floor of the office building next door.

"Since our practical objections have been met, I don't think we would be able to win a taxpayers' suit for waste of public funds," Dunton warned the association.

A group of young attorneys nevertheless moved to reject the plans. Attorney J. A. (Bud) Wyckoff immediately made a countermove for approval, however.

Bar association president Raymond Goodrich pointed

out that State Senator Donald Grunsky has promised emergency legislation to force the county to bow to the judges on any changes.

He suggested the association "take no action which might pull the rug out from under the judges."

Attorney Nancy Keppel warned that "a delay in construction in this county can be tantamount to no construction." She was backed by Wyckoff, who added that "we would have just as much difficulty with a new design altogether. It's obvious that this plan now is going to work, and that's much better than starting all over again."

The vote to disapprove lost heavily, while the vote for conditional acceptance was near unanimous.

It was Dunton who dubbed the building the "courthouse of conflict" because of its many teething troubles. "There is no other building like it, and I think its novelty bothered many attorneys," he said later.

Since its conception more than seven years ago, the county's courthouse complex has faced one crisis after another. One of the first and most serious was the failure of a 1959 bond issue for a much smaller set of buildings. The governmental center was redesigned in view of a larger population, and pay-as-you-go and later lease-purchase financing was adopted as a means of gaining construction funds.

In September of 1964, however Supervisor Robert Burton forced the board to place the courthouse back on the ballot by threatening an initiative petition if the board refused to act. The bonds, including \$4 million for the complex, won a stunning victory.

Later, however, the city and