

Supervisors grant reprieve to libraries

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Libraries - 1980-1981

SANTA CRUZ — Three of four branch libraries scheduled for closure at the end of the month were given reprieves by Santa Cruz County supervisors Tuesday to give them time to begin operating on a volunteer basis.

The board action gives the branches in Ben Lomond, Soquel and Freedom 30 days to get on their feet independent of the Santa Cruz city-county library system.

City-county librarian Charles Atkins said he would not object to leaving the books and other facilities at the branches if they remain open.

The board's decision also directs the county staff to figure out how much it will cost the county to keep the three branches open on the new basis, and to make the necessary funds available for that purpose.

The libraries were in danger of closing because of the financial problems the county is facing in the wake of Proposition 13.

The fourth branch subject to closure, in Capitola, may also get a reprieve. The county is currently in negotiations with the city of Capitola to keep that facility open.

During the hearing on the library funding, the supervisors heard several hours of testimony, most of it suggesting it would be a mistake to close any of the libraries.

Putting it in the starkest terms was Bill Hinchliff, a man who calls himself "community bibliographer" and has always argued in favor of libraries before the board.

"By closing our libraries and expanding our jails, we are entering a new dark age, Hinchliff said. Libraries are needed, he insisted, "to combat the pernicious effects of commercial television on children."

Representatives of the various communities where libraries were to be closed, including Freedom, Ben Lomond and Soquel, made their pitches — successful, as it turned out — for being allowed to keep them open on a volunteer basis.

Sara Bunnett, chairman of the city-county library board of trustees, tried to act as a mediating force between the supervisors — who were bitterly complaining that the city gets all the breaks on library service — and the city.

"Remember that 52 percent of the use of the central library (in the city) is by county residents," she said. "Try to think of this as a library system, not as the city versus the county."

Whether it's a system or not, the fact remained that the county is \$127,000 short in its library fund, and that the easiest way to make up those funds at the least cost of library service

— according to the county administrative office — was to close the branches.

The administrative office argued that even with the branches closed, there would still be a library within five miles of virtually all county residents. That figure is based on the branches at Aptos, Boulder Creek, Branciforte, Felton, La Selva Beach and Scotts Valley remaining open, along with the main library in Santa Cruz and the Watsonville library (not part of the city-county system).

The bookmobile would also remain on the road according to the CAO's plan.

Moped owners angry over gas plan

WASHINGTON (AP) — Spokesmen for the Moped Association of America have criticized the government's standby gasoline rationing plan because it denies gas to mopeds in 20 states if there is an energy emergency.

Mopeds, small two-wheeled pedal vehicles, get up to 135 miles per gallon of gas. Paul Zimmerman, executive director of the group, said "it would be ironic" if people who bought mopeds because of their fuel efficiency were denied gas.

The group said there are slightly less than one million mopeds in the nation.