

## Bookworms Return

# Library Tax To Go To Voters Second Time

*Santa Cruz Public Library - Budget*  
by Jim Johnson

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**F**ew people, if any, question that the local public library system needs more money. Even as the county population continues to grow and its demand for library services increases, the current system is in decline. Buildings have gone untended, library supplies are often inadequate, and books can take weeks to make their way to the regional branches. Add to this a decade of unrealized, postponed plans for much-needed new libraries and there is little question that libraries need more money.

"For 10 years we've been trying to get library services up to the level a community like this deserves," Library Director Anne Turner said.

The real question now is, where should that money come from?

Supporters of Measure B, the Library Initiative, are asking that voters approve a 1/4-cent sales tax in November to replace the 1/2-cent earthquake sales tax when it expires on March 31, 1997.

"If [Measure B] doesn't pass, we will have to look at the whole [library] system," Supervisor Jan Beautz said. "We will have a library system but how many libraries I don't know."

Opponents of Measure B say county taxpayers shouldn't have to shoulder another burden because the county already has enough money to adequately fund libraries, and bureaucrats just need to become more careful with how they spend money.

"I don't think any tax increases are a good idea," Measure B opponent and anti-tax activist Carolyn Busenhardt said. "I certainly feel there's enough money in the county budget to fund the libraries. I'm against a massive expansion program for the library system."

The proceeds from the tax would go toward funding Santa Cruz Public Library operations, including new facilities in Capitola, Live Oak and Scotts Valley, and other services.

It will not include funding for construction of new



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— *First District Supervisor Jan Beautz*

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libraries.

Though Live Oak and Scotts Valley don't yet have libraries, construction funding has already been set aside for them by their respective redevelopment agencies.

But in Capitola, residents will have to wait until the city can afford to build a new library before enjoying the benefits of their tax dollars in the city.

At a June meeting, county supervisors approved a provision for new library services to be part of the proposed measure.

Currently, supervisors are

funding the library system by diverting money from a special fund. A bill by State Senator Henry Mello that expires next year allowed supervisors that power until a new library tax measure passes.

Unlike its predecessor Measure L, which voters defeated in 1994, Measure B is a dedicated tax, and a tax that will sunset within 16 years.

Though the proceeds from Measure L would have been earmarked for library services, the money would have gone

into the county's general fund and been vulnerable to budgeting decisions. Measure B goes directly into the library system budget.

Because it is a dedicated tax, Measure B must be approved by a two-thirds vote.

Also, while Measure L had no time limit, Measure B will only remain in effect for 16 years, until the year 2013.

Capitola Mayor Margeret Fabrizio said she thinks the fact that Measure B is a dedicated tax will be reason enough for voters to vote for

the measure.

"I think it's very important for voters to know where the money is going," Fabrizio said. "Last time [with Measure L], there was concern from the voters that the money would go into the [county's] general fund. Now it will go directly into the [library] financing authority."

But Busenhardt said making the measure a dedicated tax and installing a time limit are both merely weak and ineffective efforts to answer voter concerns about Measure L, concerns

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which they showed by defeating it at the polls.

"Since I defeated Measure L, then they decided to make it a dedicated tax," Busenhardt said. "Even as such, I think there's already enough money to pay for libraries. And, I've said in the past, the only way a tax like this would be palatable to the voters is to have a sunset clause put in. But that doesn't make sense in this case because what's going to happen to the new [library] buildings if people decide not to renew [the tax] in 16 years?"

**New Authority, New Rule**

According to Turner, the measure would include provisions for two new governance

agreements.

The current five-person Library Oversight Committee governing board, which includes two county supervisors, two Santa Cruz City Council members and one county citizen representative, would be replaced by a nine-member board. The new board would include two county supervisors, two Santa Cruz City Council members, one city council member from the cities of Capitola and Scotts Valley, and three county citizen representatives.

In addition, a Library Financing Authority would also be established with equal representation from the county, and the cities of Watsonville, Santa Cruz, Capitola and Scotts Valley.

The cities of Capitola and

Scotts Valley have never been directly represented on the library governing board.

The new financing authority would have control of the library budget, Turner said.

Currently, the library budget must be approved by the Santa Cruz City Council and the Board of Supervisors.

In addition, the measure includes a maintenance of effort clause which guarantees that neither the county nor the cities of Santa Cruz or Watsonville can change the amount they contribute to the libraries.

Also included in the measure is a clause which changes the way funds are allocated to individual libraries. Currently, libraries receive funding based on their total circulation. Under Measure B, funding would be allocated according to a popula-

tion formula.

In addition to funding operations, the measure will help pay for restoring library hours cut in 1993, more news and children's services, the first phase of an automation upgrade, and deferred maintenance.

Barbara Palmer, the co-founder of the proposed Aptos Unified School District, said libraries are an extension of schools and education. And, she adds that she hopes people in Aptos will support the measure because of its importance.

"I think people in Aptos are real aware of the lack of positive services and certainly libraries are a positive service," Palmer said. "I made the point that I wouldn't vote for another prison bond until there was an education bond passed and going right along with it is

libraries."

Palmer said that the shortage of books at the Aptos branch is one way to measure the shortage of funds necessary to run libraries.

"I think people in Aptos are aware of the need. Anybody who's gone to the Aptos Library knows it. They have a wonderful system of tracking books but nine times out of 10 the book isn't there. There's a lack of books and that's ridiculous," Palmer added.

But Palmer also said she worried that a lack of awareness might hurt the measure's chances.

"I'm concerned that people aren't talking more about it," she said. "I hope people in Aptos realize that helping the county library system will help Aptos." □

by Jim Johnson

It's been a long time since Capitola had anything approaching a library and it may be awhile before it gets one. Live Oak has never had an adult library and it has been planning for one for a long time. Both have wanted a library of their own for decades.

Both could see their wishes come true if voters pass Measure B, the so-called Library Initiative, in November.

If Measure B passes, a 1/4-cent sales tax to fund library operations would replace the current 1/2-cent earthquake sales tax when it expires in March, 1997.

The measure includes a dedicated tax which would go directly to library coffers and expire unless renewed in 16 years. The measure requires a two-thirds vote to pass.

For Live Oak voters, the issue is simple. Either Measure B passes and they get their new library or it fails and they probably won't get a new library, according to Supervisor Jan Beautz.

"There is money in the redevelopment [agency] budget for [building] a new library and the funding for the children's library is built into the [Measure's proposed library] budget," Beautz said. "Everything is on the table but if this doesn't pass, that funding will go away. This is extremely important for Live Oak. We have the funds to build a library but you need money to operate it."

The Live Oak library would be a large regional branch located at 17th Avenue and Capitola Road.

The closest Live Oak has ever come to having a real library was the Live Oak Children's Library, which had operated out of the East Cliff

# Live Oak Library Planned Should Measure Pass

Shopping Center since 1989.

But the library was forced to close last December after water damage from a leaky roof made the premises uninhabitable.

A roofing contractor and a plumbing contractor are being sued for damage to the building and its contents but Live Oak children are still without a library.

Library Director Anne Turner said if Measure B passes, the library system's proposed budget includes funding for a planned expansion of the Live Oak Children's Library, that is if a location is found. "We continue to look for a replacement for the Children's Library," Turner said.

For Capitola, the wait for its own library will likely stretch well into the future even if the measure passes because it can't afford to build one. But Mayor Margaret Fabrizio said she prefers to concentrate on the advan-

tages the measure will give Capitola residents if it passes.

"If [Measure B] passes, we'll have a seat in the [public library system's] financing authority and the governing body," Fabrizio said. "For the first time, Capitola will have some say. It's still very important."

Capitola has had an agreement with the county to build a library since 1982, when the city's newly-formed redevelopment agency collected \$1.2 million in county funding with the stipulation that the money be used to build a new library. According to Capitola's contract with the county, the city is supposed to build a 7,000 square foot library near the Capitola Mall, spending at least \$1.2 million.

But other city concerns like construction of a community center and a gymnasium, and, more recently, the repayment of the city's long term debt, have taken precedence in Capitola and

left its promise to the county unfulfilled to date.

But the county probably couldn't have afforded to fund operations at a new library branch anyway. With the county in a fiscal crisis, State Senator Henry Mello sponsored a bill to allow supervisors to keep libraries running by diverting funds from a special district source until a new tax could be passed. But that financing didn't extend to new libraries.

Now, though, if Measure B passes, there will be funding for new library operations once Capitola finds the funding to build its library.

Capitola briefly entertained the notion of contributing its \$1.2 million share to a joint library effort with Live Oak but decided against that option.

"I think Capitola needs library services but I think Capitola needs individual library services, not just joint services" Fabrizio said.

Fabrizio said the city is looking at several sites for a new library including a city-owned, one-acre parcel next to the Kaufman and Broad development at Clares and Wharf Roads, and an assortment of empty storefronts and properties for rent.

Turner said she supports the establishment of one-stop information centers in places without immediate library access like Capitola. Turner said the information centers would be something like an ATM machine and would be hooked up to the public library's catalog.

Capitola used to have a library. Opened in 1953 in a small storefront across from City Hall, the library was named for the city's first mayor, Harlan P. Kessler.

It was forced to close in the late '70s, a casualty of infamous Proposition 13. □