

Freedom Library provokes heated City Council debate

By KEN McLAUGHLIN

Following a heated discussion involving county Supervisor Chris Matthews, the City Council Tuesday night kept the door open on a proposal to make Freedom Library part of Watsonville Library.

During the discussion, Councilman Frank Osmer and City Manager Jim Buell remarked that the county was trying to "pass the buck" by asking the city to take over the Freedom branch, now part of the Santa Cruz City-County library system.

"It's typical of our relationship with the county," Osmer said. "They cut off the funds and then tell us to bail them out."

Buell reminded the council that the city was "playing with scarce resources," and thus shouldn't have to take on another financial burden.

Buell said he feared that when funds for the library dry up after July 1 (the start of the city's fiscal year), then city officials will "look like the bad guys" for closing the Freedom Library. He then made his remark about the county "passing the buck."

"That's what I had in mind," said Osmer. "You said it much better (than I)."

Supervisor Matthews, however, staunchly denied the buck-passing charge, indicating that he felt city officials were distorting the issue.

He noted that he and two other supervisors — Dan Forbus and Gary Patton — had voted to keep funding the library until July 1. He added that he didn't "like the attitude" of some other supervisors (presumably the supervisors who voted against the library funding — Marilyn Liddicoat and Pat Liberty).

Matthews pointed out that since the money for the library will have to come from a contingency fund, a 4-1 vote will be needed to extend the library's funds through the rest of the fiscal year.

In regard to Buell's comment about the city officials "looking like the bad guys" after July 1, Matthews noted that Freedom residents will have to find a way to sustain the library on their own after that date.

In any case, Matthews said, he was not appearing before the council "to get into an argument." He said he wanted Freedom residents to be able to "take care of themselves and not worry about politicians."

"It's hard to put a price tag on knowledge," the supervisor said, after noting that city officials had questioned the financial practicability of the proposal to make the Freedom Library part of the city's library system.

Margaret Blaisdell, a Watsonville resident who uses the Freedom Library, asked the council to "simply help us find all the information that we can," and see if ways could be found to save the library.

"I don't want it to be a matter of quarreling," said the woman, who added that she hoped the newspaper wouldn't "blow the issue out of proportion."

One possible way of saving the Freedom Library is to merge it with the library at Freedom School.

School Trustee E. Wayne Moore told the council that Superintendent Wallace Raynor was enthusiastic about the proposal, having seen similar mergers work well (when Raynor was an administrator in Orange County).

Moore said he'd also contacted other trustees about the idea, and all appeared to be in favor of the merger.

In the end, the council unanimously accepted a motion by Osmer to refer the matter to the city staff, which was directed to work with Freedom residents. No commitment on the city's part was made, however.

In other business Tuesday night, the council:

—Voted 6-1 to approve downtown sidewalk sales on May 1-3, July 24-26 and September 25-27. The dissenting vote came from Councilman Osmer, who repeated his oft-heard view that sidewalk sales "degrade the city." Hal Hyde, an executive of Ford's Department Store, pointed out that the sales will coincide with other events — such as an art show,

the opening of the Mansion House and the Apple Festival. But Osmer said the sales were like "having a dogfight in conjunction with the coronation of the queen."

—Banned parking along Walker Street between Kearney and Ford Street, exempting loading zones in front of Watsonville Canning and Berman Steel Co. Also, two-hour parking will be allowed in front of the single-family homes between Sixth Street and Ford Street.

—Prohibited temporary buildings in industrial parks. Exempted are construction trailers.

—Heard Councilman Osmer, a long-time antagonist of Police Chief Al Williams, defend the Police Department in saying that the department couldn't have prevented the deaths of two young boys who were slain on Mt. Madonna three weeks ago.

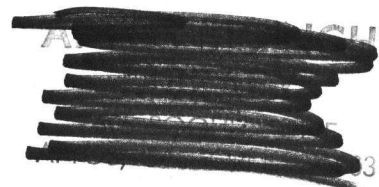
—Heard consulting engineer Chris Kahr reiterate that the city was "doing everything it could" to rectify complaints of the staff of the regional Water Quality Control Board, which has told the city to clean up its dump.

—OK'd the closing of Maple Avenue between Lincoln Street and Blackburn Street between March 5 and March 10. The Pajaro Valley Unified School District will sponsor a carnival similar to the one held last year.

—Approved the closure of Peck Street from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on March 15 for the second annual Spring Fashion Show sponsored by the Central Business Improvement District.

—Appointed Elsie Post (whom Bill Johnston mistakenly called Emily Post) to the city's library board. Blanche Montague was reappointed to the board. Both appointments were for four-year terms.

WATSONVILLE
REGISTER-PAJARONIAN
February 27, 1980



REFERENCE