

Energy crisis

Sentinel 4-6-83

Political group demands energy plan be scrapped

By DENISE SIEBENTHAL -

Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — A conservative political group is challenging county supervisors to either drop an energy conservation and production plan or discuss why they shouldn't do so.

The Aptos-based group, Associates for Good Government, made its challenge in an extensive critique of a report by Energy Future Santa Cruz, "A Citizens' Plan for Energy Self-Reliance in Santa Cruz County."

Supervisors in January unanimously agreed to implement or give more study to about 30 of the plan's 57 recommendations to local government.

Associates for Good Government believes this action constitutes "approval" of the Energy Future Santa Cruz plan as a basis for long-term planning or legislation. They want this "approval" rescinded.

Supervisors' Chairman Joe Cucchiara said he received the Aptos group's critique Tuesday morning and plans to pass it on to fellow board members. It will be up to individual supervisors whether they want to discuss the critique, Cucchiara said.

Cucchiara said supervisors never adopted the entire Energy Future Santa Cruz plan, but only certain recommendations in the plan.

Associates for Good Government's position is that supervisors approved the plan despite serious question raised about the data used.

They further contended in the critique that a majority of the local population had no part in the formulation of the plan, and implementation will cause enormous changes in lifestyle.

They also stated the plan is "highly questionable" because "it rests upon the assumption of an 'Energy Crisis.'"

To this, Energy Future's John Cohn replied, "Energy prices may be going down, but your PG&E bill isn't going down. PG&E just asked for a major rate increase."

Cohn was one of the chief members of Energy Future Santa Cruz, the nonprofit group that put the plan together with a grant from the National Science Foundation.

More than 2,000 citizens took part in the plan, Energy Future members say.

The Associates for Good Government said when authors of the plan were challenged about the existence of an energy crisis, they backed off and called it an economic crisis instead.

"There is no 'Economic Crisis' — at

least none that county government or the plan can cure," The Associates stated.

"The report is about the economic drain on this community from energy and how we can stop that," stated Carrol Tatro, another member of Energy Future Santa Cruz.

"They (The Associates) have their darn heads in the sand because there is an energy crisis in the world. We have a glut of oil, but that's not a permanent condition," she added.

The Associates for Good Government further stated in their critique that "nearly every significant statistical assertion in the plan is either questionable or demonstrably false."

Bob Stayton, a solar energy teacher at Cabrillo College who holds a master's degree in physics, was the technical advisor on the plan. He said all the statistics used to back the plan are contained in a technical appendix. This appendix, while not widely distributed, could have been made available to the plan's opponents, he said.

Stayton said, "The longterm problem is a large dependency on fossil fuels, particularly on oil and gas. Reserves are in a decline in the United States. Some call it a dramatic decline, others probably wouldn't."

But the Associates for Good Government have included their own statistics.

They noted, for instance, that with 1,200 billion barrels of potential oil reserves, we have about 70 years of oil left at present consumption.

The United States has 50 years left of natural gas, 200 years of coal and with shale oil and tar sands added in, and more than 450 years supply of fossil fuels, they stated in their critique.

While the Associates for Good Government believe in voluntary conservation, they are against Energy Future Santa Cruz' proposals for local energy production.

"There is a difference between conservation and production. The grandiose plans for renewable resources are not cost effective and will raise the price of energy," said member Douglas McConnell, an energy consultant in the Middle East.

Members McConnell, Bob McKenzie and Frank O'Connell said at a press conference today that the critique, of "white paper," was prepared because they felt they didn't get a fair shake at the plan, despite two public hearings before supervisors.

Supervisors didn't respond to any of their claims and already had their minds made up, the three men said.