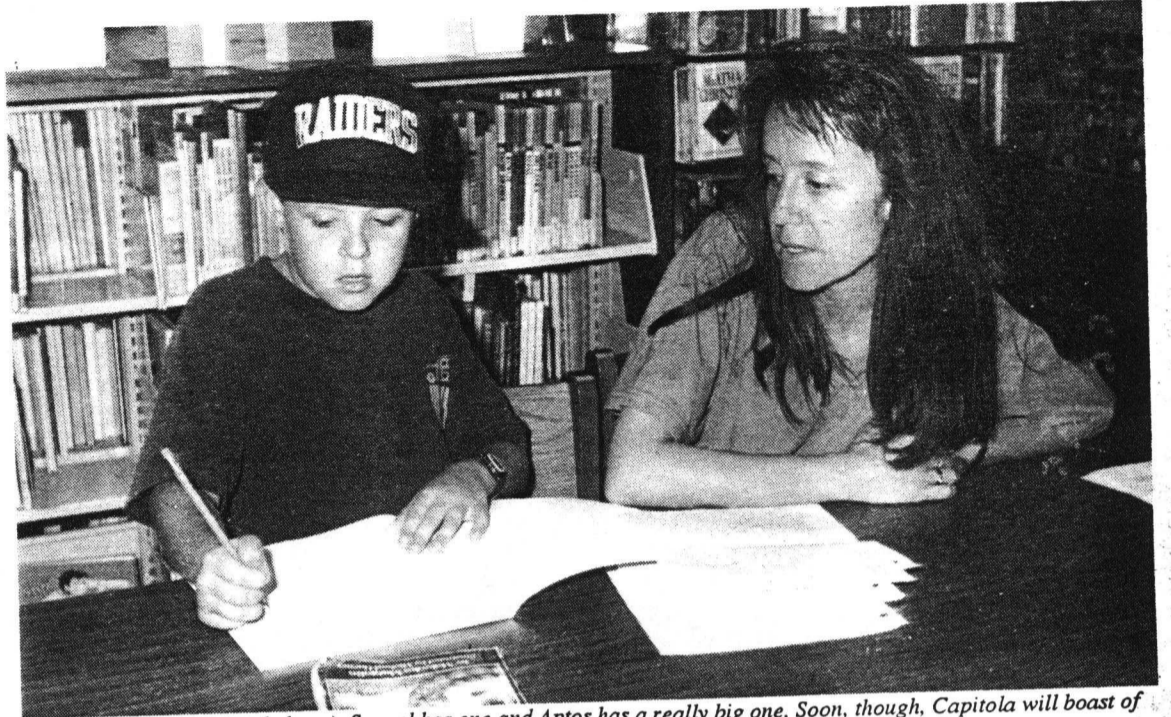


Capitola Approves Library Agreement Pact Ends Decade of Bookless City

by Mark Adams

Catastrophic as our 1982 flood/mud disaster was, simultaneous, ongoing, quieter disasters are the waste of an estimated two hundred million or more person-hours per year in Santa Cruz County viewing commercial television (cultural bubblegum), and the time and money which children devote to coin-operated video games. Our community libraries, if they become dynamic enough, may offer superior alternatives to the "tube" and the computerized "war game."

—Bill Hinchliff, "community bibliographer" in correspondence with the city; 1982



Live Oak has one (pictured above), Soquel has one and Aptos has a really big one. Soon, though, Capitola will boast of the largest in Mid-County. A new agreement between the county and city calls for a 12,000-square-foot branch in the city.

Hinchliff, in 1982, bombarded the Capitola City Council with a series of calligraphed letters like this, urging the city to somehow maintain its small, store-front library near City Hall.

But funding was limited and the Capitola Branch Library was soon shut down. City leaders, including the very vocal Michael Routh, vowed to bring the books back.

More than a decade later, the city council has approved an agreement with the county to construct a 12,000-square-foot library on city-owned property at Clares and Wharf roads. The contract was approved February 11 by a 4-1 vote, with Council Member Bob Bucher dissenting.

The county Board of Supervisors approved the agreement on December 15, 1992.

The pact calls for each side to pay half the estimated \$2.4 million to build and stock the branch. The city will maintain the exterior, and the county library system will manage the interior.

Despite concerns that the city would incur too much debt over the deal—Capitola will finance its part—council members said libraries are valued by the community and that the city should have one.

An Issue of Representation

"I'm really glad," said Council Member Margaret Fabrizio of the plan. "It's really important that we have a library. We've been without one for too long."

Bucher, who couldn't be reached for comment, had opposed the agreement when the council formally considered it on January 28. "I don't think we have the money," he ar-

gued. And, he added: "We have never had an agreement with the county that has worked... You have to be dreaming that this is a reality."

Bucher voted against the pact, but the majority indicated the agreement was favorable, though one concern remains.

The library will be run by the Santa Cruz County/City Library System; Capitola, however, is not represented on its

ownership of books donated to the branch, she explained. The city will also seek representation on the oversight committee.

Fabrizio and Routh are scheduled to meet with the oversight committee in March

covered in the library system's general fund budget, county officials said.

The two will also establish a building committee to oversee construction of the new branch. The committee will consist of two council members, two supervisors, and representatives from the system and community.

"It will be a process that is open so that everybody can have their views heard," Burrell said. Residents interested in serving on the committee should complete a city application form or send a short note to the council, he said.

"Even if someone has a more narrow interest," he added, "like layout because they live near the property, they are welcome to participate, even just to come to the meetings."

Although the ribbon cutting ceremony is still far off, the project will begin shortly, Burrell said. "Our first step is to set up a time-line, and finances would be part of that."

The time-line should be set by mid-March, Burrell said. According to county estimates, the library could be completed by spring 1994, though no firm date has been mentioned.

Bringing the Books Back

Most people remember the old Capitola Branch as a small, store-front thing, commonly described as a "reading room." Indeed, the original branch was small, occupying only 1,200 square feet, but it was used often by Capitola residents.

The branch contained

10,000 items—books, magazines and records—and was located on Capitola Road across from City Hall. In 1974, to note, 24,000 items were checked out, according to library records.

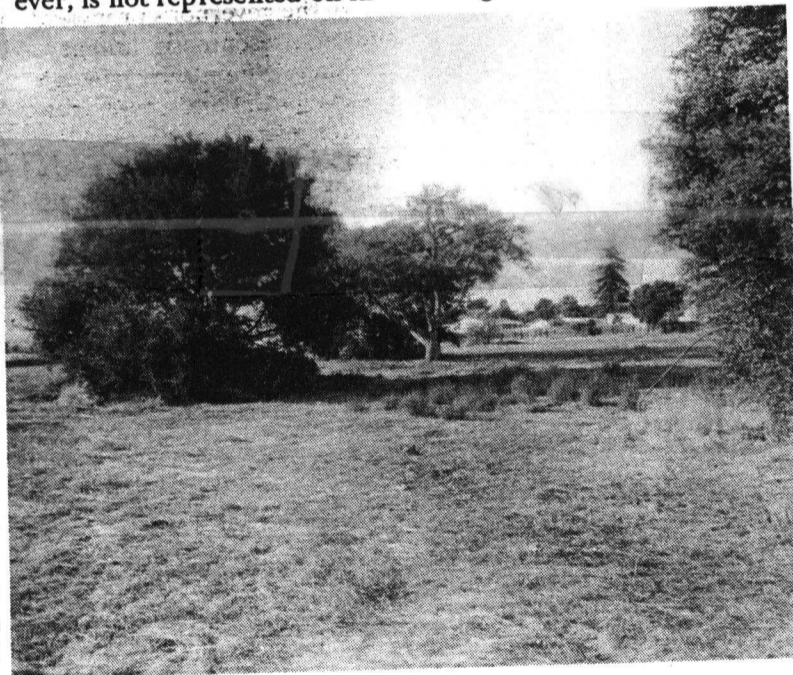
The county managed the branch until 1981, when funding for libraries declined significantly. Several smaller branches were also closed; though, some were taken over by community groups. Capitola ran its library for almost a year then, but in 1982 closed the branch for lack of funds. Its books soon were distributed to other county branches.

In 1987, the city agreed to build a 7,000-square-foot library near the Capitola Mall extension and the county promised to staff it.

That deal, however, was extensively modified. Capitola decided it wanted to build the library on property it had purchased at Clares and Wharf roads. And the county wanted to build a larger branch, one too big for the mall site.

The newest agreement is actually a modification of the 1987 pact, according to the county. But both sides have had the right to scuttle the deal from the onset.

Today, "it's to the point where it's gone from the talking stage, of what might be, to the planning [stage]," Burrell of Capitola said. "The community is really going to do this. And I think that's really neat, that the community can set a goal and achieve it." □



oversight committee. The cities of Scotts Valley and Watsonville aren't either.

Even those who favored the agreement are wary of the system's management of libraries. Some in the community, notably Capitola resident and city treasurer Glenn Hanna, complained the system places too much emphasis on reference materials and not enough bucks for books.

There is a safeguard, though, Fabrizio said. The Friends of Capitola Library, yet to be established, will have

to discuss adding a Capitola representative to its five-member board. "If we get a seat," Fabrizio explained, "it will allow us to have influence in the system."

Starting the Project

Now that the agreement has been signed, both the county and city expect to work out the financial end of the plan by June 29. Capitola will finance a large portion of its share through the city Redevelopment Agency, City Manager Steve Burrell said.

The county's share will be