

# Poll shows support for library tax

STAFF REPORT

*Libraries - 1990-1999*

There is widespread support for a special sales tax levy to support libraries in Santa Cruz County, a special public opinion poll shows.

The survey, commissioned by the county, the city of Santa Cruz and the Santa Cruz Public Library System to test voter reaction to a special tax levy, will be presented to the library oversight committee Monday night. The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. in the second floor

meeting room at the central branch library in Santa Cruz.

City and county officials are looking for ways to fund the library system in the wake of state cutoffs of support from a Special District Augmentation Fund to special districts such as the public library.

Last year, state Sen. Henry Mello was able to get the legislature to authorize Santa Cruz County, for one year only, to take property tax dollars from water

and port districts and give it to the library.

This year, however, Mello has been unable to get support, in the face of powerful lobbyists, from his fellow legislators for an extension of the bill.

Now, local officials are proposing that when the one-half-cent earthquake recovery tax expires next year, it be replaced with a one-quarter-cent sales tax to finance libraries.

An election could be held in No-

vember, if approved by the county board of supervisors and the city councils involved.

The public opinion poll, conducted by the San Francisco-based firm of Gene Bergman and Associates last month, showed that nearly three-fourths of the November electorate would vote "yes" on the measure.

Bergman's conclusion was that the poll indicated that voters "clearly support a strong public library system, recognize the li-

braries' need for additional funding and firmly believe that there is a direct relationship between a sound public library and improving the quality of public education."

Seventy-four percent of those surveyed would vote "yes" on a general measure to raise money for libraries, the pollsters said. Support for the proposed measure is weakest in the Pajaro Valley's Fourth Supervisorial District, which is largely served by the Watsonville City Library, which is

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not part of the Santa Cruz system. The poll showed that only 66 percent of voters here were likely to vote for a sales tax measure. In the Fifth Supervisorial District, which includes the San Lorenzo Valley, Scotts Valley and part of Santa Cruz, support was strongest - 79 percent. Sixty-eight percent supported it in the Second District, which includes Capitola and Aptos; and 77 percent in the Third District, which is largely the city of Santa Cruz and the north coast.