

Citizens-Board Unit Seeks To 'Clear Air' On La Fonda

By Len Klempnauer
Sentinel Asst. City Editor

The new La Fonda High school, target of a multitude of controversies in past months, came under the gun again, as expected, at a meeting of the Santa Cruz city board of education last night.

Charles Wheat, 711 California street, who led the attack on La Fonda last night, asked that a small joint citizens-trustees committee be formed to go over all aspects of the high school site.

The board agreed, and a committee of three board members and four citizens was selected.

Wheat submitted a long but comprehensive list of questions that he says the public wants answered before the electorate will support any future request for additional tax monies sought by the board.

Later in the meeting, Trustee Charles Smith said most of the questions have been answered at one time or another.

In concluding his typewritten, prepared three-page document, Wheat said: "Most of these questions can be answered by a simple 'yes' or 'no.' If, as I feel, most of the answers are 'yes' (and it seems there were a lot of people who went to the polls last week said the same), then it seems we should have some changes to correct the situation."

Wheat's questions touched on a wide range of problems that have been confronting the board during the past few months. They included not only the amounts of money spent already in planning and site work on the La Fonda site, but alleged inaccuracies in figures released through the administration and board on amounts of money spent and how money was spent.

He then delved into other areas, including a student conduct and dress code in effect at the schools; statements made by the administration on predictions of what curtailments would be made but weren't in the high school budget if the override tax failed; additions to the high school athletic program, including a platform for Santa Cruz High coaches to view football practices, movies taken of games and practices, new uniforms for SCHS football players; that an increased tax base in the high school district, along with increased federal and state subsidies, would keep the amount of money available for education at its present level; and "brainwashing" of students by children about the override.

Wheat asked that a committee be formed of himself, La Fonda high school architect Kal Porter, Francis Bell, 112 Getchell street, George Atwood, 1911 Bay street, and Loren Ingols, 515 Van Ness avenue, and representatives of the school board to go over all aspects of the La Fonda school.

Later in the meeting Board President John Melendy appointed Trustees Eugene Adams, Lewis Alcorn and Charles Smith to represent the board on the committee to meet with the citizens.

Trustee Smith pointed out that "almost all the questions" submitted by Wheat, and also those in a letter in The Sentinel's "Voice of the People" column from Atwood, have been answered "one time or another" by the board and administration through various media.

President Melendy conceded a complete breakdown of communication between the board and public has come about, but claimed it is a

Twenty-Seven New Citizens



Twenty-seven men, women and children from all over the world yesterday became naturalized United States citizens, in ceremonies conducted by Superior Court Judge Gilbert Perry.

The new citizens, who renounced allegiance to their former homelands and swore an oath to this country, ranged in age from 4-year-old Kim Lee Levonian, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. William Levonian, 614 Miramar drive, to 94-year-old Mrs. Edith Wolmershausen, above, 170 West Cliff drive, whose name is

being changed to Edith Wolmer.

Judge Perry told the 27, including four children not required to renounce the old and swear to uphold the new because of their age, that "you have seen fit to do something that requires a tremendous amount of courage."

He said a number of individuals "have done a really tremendous job in attempting to become American citizens" because of the difficulty with language and because of their age.

He stressed the need for

each new citizen to fully participate in community life, urging that problems not be shrugged off and left for the police or church to settle if individual action is required.

He also noted in this country rights are accompanied by duties and that there is no room here for dictators, because this is a country of law and order.

Don Mungai, exalted ruler of the Santa Cruz Elks lodge, addressed the group briefly and distributed small replicas of the American flag to each new citizen.

"two-way street," with the citizenry just as responsible for the breakdown as the board and administration.

He continued that he believes the citizen-board committee is "the solution," but "I think it needs a wider base."

Wheat said that a "meeting of the minds" could be reached "in a couple of meetings," instead of taking months. Wheat said he wanted the committee to be kept "in balance."

"Let's not stack the deck (in favor of the board)," he asked. Trustee Adams said that after listening to all the "helpful suggestions" (he said he would not call them "criticisms"), that nothing has been leveled at the "quality of education" nor the district teachers, which are the "guts of the (school) system." He said he would be "dismayed" if criticism had been leveled at either and he is "hopeful that people of goodwill" can get together to put the "district back on a good footing."

Trustee Smith volunteered to answer the questions raised by Wheat in his presentation last night and those asked by Atwood in his letter to the editor. There were other questions also brought up about La Fonda last night.

Ed Hansmann, 137 Wanda court, a perennial opponent to the La Fonda site, spoke at various points throughout the evening.

He opened by calling it "bad procedure" that he was not allowed to speak at last month's meeting on points brought up by architect Porter on the La Fonda site. In October, Hansmann was told by Melendy that he must speak prior to discussion by the board and architect. He did so, but was not permitted to discuss anything after the board and architect discussion. Then he said last night that he wanted to speak to points from last month's meeting but neither the architect nor plans were at the session.

Later he said Santa Cruz High school, which over-all has only one building, is

for children to eat properly."

She then asked how "high above flood level is the lowest building going to be" at La Fonda.

Assistant Superintendent of Business Dave Grey said the lowest building is the gym, which is two feet above the playfields, which have been raised three feet. He said the last rain, although light, left no water settling on the fields except for some "puddles." He said the drainage ditch installed on the site is built to carry water at the highest water level.

Other actions and discussions concerning La Fonda and the losing 30-cent override tax defeated at the November 8 election included:

BOND SALE—The board decided to table a proposal to sell the remaining \$700,000-plus of bonds that eventually will pay for La Fonda construction until "we get our problems straightened out," as recommended by Trustee Ambrose Cowden.

ELECTION—Trustee Lloyd Hebborn termed the one-sided defeat of the override tax hike "sad" while Cowden added that "we got clobbered." The issue lost at the polls, 14,358 "no" to 8901 "yes."

COUNTY COUNSEL—County Counsel Bill Card, in a letter, said he must withdraw as the school board's attorney in the La Fonda use permit questions. President Melendy said Card must withdraw as trustees' adviser since the county of Santa Cruz has come into the picture. Card first is the board of supervisors' counsel.

On Trustee Adams' suggestion, the board said it will ask the Watsonville law firm of Wyckoff, Parker, Boyle and Pope to become its legal adviser in the use permit and related La Fonda questions. The firm previously represented the school district in negotiating purchases of the La Fonda properties.

Superintendent Denzil Morrissey was instructed to ask the law firm to represent the

Wheat said the "humor" of the situation should be recognized, because the public actually is paying for all of the attorneys—the city attorney, the county counsel and the private attorney.

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Later he said Santa Cruz High school, which over-all has only approximately 18 acres, has more land for teaching and athletic purposes than the La Fonda school.

Melendy answered that he has no reasons to believe that there is not adequate land for the La Fonda school.

Hansmann continued that at one time fire access roads were in the La Fonda plans, but then the "heat was put on" about inadequate athletic area, so now plans do not have the fire roads included. He said athletic fields and parking lots now are overlapping. He went on that the board claims it cannot operate two high schools on the present 85-cent tax rate so it cannot possibly operate three. And he added that he doesn't like a proposal to put in vending machines instead of a cafeteria for the lunch program.

Mrs. LaSalle Bachelder, 1299 Granite Creek road, said having vending machines instead of a cafeteria is a false economy move. She said she would not have backed a bond issue for a new high school that did not include a place

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Trustee Genevieve Beck asked if the county board of supervisors could reimburse the school district for fees it must pay the private attorneys. Morrissey said "no" but Adams said he thinks it would be a "good idea."

Mrs. H. R. Lans, 815 Riverside avenue, speaking from the audience, said she is displeased with the board going to the expense of hiring an outside attorney. So said Hansmann.

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