

Library-1980

Mayor Liberty urges library board to include Scotts Valley and Capitola

With the county library system facing tough financial times, local officials are urging county supervisors and City of Santa Cruz to create a new four-city jurisdiction to operate and fund the system.

"It's time for a change," said Scotts Valley Mayor Phil Liberty.

He said the joint powers agreement, signed in 1964 between the city and county of Santa Cruz, should be expanded to include the cities of Scotts Valley and Capitola.

But bureaucratic wheels grind slowly.

Library Board chairman Hal Morris said patience is needed. "Libraries are conservative bodies and slow to change," he said.

Neither Scotts Valley nor Capitola were incorporated in 1964 and Proposition 13 had not yet limited the fundraising options of county governments.

"I urged them to hurry along and change the joint powers agreement ... and expand it to include Scotts Valley and Capitola," Liberty said.

"Until now we have been taxed without representation."

If included in the agreement, Scotts Valley and Capitola might agree to increase their contribution.

Before the agreement can be revised, however, Santa Cruz City Council and the county supervisors must approve the change.

And that takes time, Morris said.

"However, I think if the people who are interested in libraries and the library board are persistent in speaking with local officials we will be sure to get a system which includes a four-city jurisdiction and then there will be more potential for getting additional resources than there are now."

The Library board has asked the mayor of Santa Cruz to call a meeting of the four jurisdictions to investigate the proposed structure.

According to Morris, Santa Cruz Councilman John Laird will ask council later this month to approve such a meeting.

Circumstances have severely limited the county's ability to supply its contracted share of library funding.

Since Proposition 13 stripped local governments of revenue-raising authority, the county has had a difficult time funding even state-mandated services such as health, welfare and the court system.

This had led to a serious budget shortfall for what should be a growing library system for a growing community, Morris said.

The county's reduced contribution automatically reduces the Santa Cruz City contribution so that the 65-35 formula (65 percent of the costs are paid by the county, 35 percent by the city) is maintained.

The joint powers agreement divides system costs between the two jurisdictions on the basis of library circulation.

"The library system has become the prisoner of the deteriorating financial situation in county government," Morris said.

But County Administrative Officer George Newell denies the library system is in serious trouble.

To the contrary, Newell said, the library has received "very favorable treatment" from the city and county of Santa Cruz, with funding increases of 126 percent since the passage of Prop. 13.

Library Director Anne M. Turner disagrees. She warns that if Newell's proposed 1987-88 library budget is approved, staff layoffs and limited orders of new books could

follow.

Newell said the \$2.6 million preliminary budget proposed for the library includes an 8.2 percent cost-of-living increase for services and supplies, and 20.4 percent more to pay library debts.

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"The library system has become the prisoner of the deteriorating financial situation in County government," Morris said.

"The circumstances of 1987 and the future are clearly different than those of 1964 and the library system cannot do its best unless its organization and financing reflect current circumstances."