

Grand jury charges

County burdened with multiplicity of competing fire, water districts

Consolidation of all county water districts and all county fire protection districts into two countywide districts is recommended in the 1970 Santa Cruz County Grand Jury report, released Friday.

The grand jurors note that there are 17 fire protection districts in the county, each having separate administration, training, and equipment and financing problems.

While pointing out that consolidation should provide better fire protection coverage throughout the county, the grand jurors make special note of the fact that the Aptos firehouse is located at the edge of the Aptos Fire Protection District.

"In order to provide proper service," the report says, "the district is necessarily considering an additional firehouse."

Further considering fire protection problems in Aptos, the report notes "the extremely high" fire insurance rate in the Aptos area. The report blames the high rates on an insufficient water supply for the Rancho del Mar shopping center and recommends that the Soquel Creek Water District bring in an additional water connection to the center and provide a greater water supply to the area.

The report indicates that the Aptos Chamber of Commerce should be effective in urging the National Board of Fire Underwriters to reconsider its rating for Aptos after more water is provided to Rancho del Mar.

A consolidated water district was recommended by the grand jury because "individual water districts do not have the resources to develop adequate reservoir capacity for periods of emergency or need, nor do they have adequate financing to install underground mains."

The report also urges the interconnection of all major county water systems so that water can be transferred during emergencies.

The grand jurors comment specifically about the Soquel Creek Water District, pointing out that much of the Aptos area is served by it but does not actually belong to the district. The report recommends that the board of supervisors and the Aptos Chamber of Commerce "use their considerable influence to bring about or encourage a vote of people in the service area to determine if they do wish to join" the district.

Speaking of the water situation in the Vienna Woods area, the Grand Jury recommends that the county sell its interests in that water system to the Soquel Creek district. The report indicates that the system, which was taken over by the county, after a private water company failed to provide adequate service, is worth about \$80,000.

In one other water matter, the jury recommends that the county begin thinking more seriously about construction of a dam in the midcounty area. The report does not mention a location for such a dam, but apparently refers to a proposed location site on Aptos Creek near the entrance to Nisene Marks State Park.

The Grand Jury committee on highways, roads and water conservation also goes into some detail in its report on the Mt. Hermon slide. The Grand Jury issued some interim reports on

this problem during the year and reiterates many of its findings in the final report.

The crux of the report is that the Kaiser Sand and Gravel Co. operation above the slide seems to be to blame for the slippage of the road and that Kaiser officials have been uncooperative in attempting to find a solution to the problem.

The report also says: "It is believed that county supervisors and public works department officials have been 'negligent, improper and favoring toward Kaiser' in their handling of the situation.

Several recommendations are made, aimed at ending the slide.

The jurors recommend that Kaiser apply for a change in its

use permit since the firm "is presently in violation" of conditions on the original report. If Kaiser does not apply for changes, the jurors say, the board of supervisors should reopen the matter itself.

The report also says the county should institute legal action in an attempt to recover from Kaiser "at least a portion of the costs which have been borne by the taxpayers" for the constant mending of Mt. Hermon Road across the slide area.

The board of supervisors is also criticized for failing to respond to the interim reports about the slide.

An unusual solution to some of the county's transportation

problems is proposed: "Air transportation should be encouraged wherever feasible as an alternative to vehicular travel to and from the county."

The report is critical of the air pollution caused by the Pacific Cement and Aggregates (PCA) plant near Davenport and recommends that the local air pollution control district "should take a hard stand in its regulation of this plant. Extension of time for operating the six old kilns should not be granted unless the control district is convinced of PCA's good intentions to proceed immediately in a workman-like manner to bring the emissions from the six old kilns within the limits set by the unified air pollution control district."

One county library system?

Recommendations for county-wide consolidation of service districts were recommended by the county grand jury report, and some of the proposals are by no means new, such as consolidating fire and water districts.

Among them is a suggestion that a citizens advisory group be set up to explore the pros and cons of a county-wide library system, before the City of Watsonville builds a new public library building.

"Watsonville for years has tried to improve its library facilities, but instead of improvement, there has been an erosion of services. Once again the library has been given very low priority in the capital improvement program," the report states.

Driver faces felony rap

Lloyd Gordon Wilson, 45, of 1950 17th Ave., Santa Cruz, was booked on felony charges of drunk driving and hit-and-run Thursday of last week by Santa Cruz police.

Wilson allegedly was the driver of a car that collided with a car driven by Linda Louise Lee, 21, of 2005 7th Ave., Santa Cruz.

According to a police report the accident happened at Ocean and Franklin St. at 8:47 a.m. Wilson was arrested a short time later when a police officer spotted a damaged car, similar to one described by witnesses to the accident, in the parking lot of a Santa Cruz motel.

Carl H. Wilson, 26, of 924 Kennedy Dr., Capitola, was injured in a head-on collision on East Cliff Dr. near Pearl St., Tuesday of last week.

According to a Santa Cruz police report, a car driven by Steven E. Lane, 24, of 1420 King St., collided with Wilson's automobile, after passing another car.

Wilson was taken to Santa Cruz General Hospital by ambulance, and Lane was taken to Dominican Hospital also by ambulance.

Drunk charge

Eugene Richard Keen, 24, of 404½ S. 49th Ave., Capitola, was arraigned on a charge of drunk driving, and his case was continued to next Wednesday for his plea.

Under a reciprocal agreement with the Santa Cruz City-County library, established in 1968, south county residents have borrowing privileges at the Watsonville library. During the 1969-70 fiscal year, 39,082 volumes were borrowed by county residents and the city was paid \$27,318.

While the reciprocal agreement seems to be a vast improvement over the previous situation (where the county operated a small branch library) grand jurors said, "we believe it is merely a step toward better library services for citizens at the southern end of the county.

The jurors said a study should seek answers to questions such as: Could residents of Watsonville be better served by a regional library operated by the Santa Cruz City and County Public Library? Should Watsonville join other cities and the county in the formation of a centralized cataloging and physical processing center? Should it become an integral part of the city-county library?

Both libraries were commended by the jurors for joining

the Monterey Bay Area Cooperative library system.

Further consolidation of school districts is another idea to which grand jurors said they were "very sympathetic."

They suggested that an educational program should be mounted before the general election of 1972 so that voters will have objective data concerning the advantages and disadvantages of a single county-wide (K-12) unified school district.

Voters also should be given an opportunity to say whether they wish to continue the present method of electing the county superintendent of schools or have him selected by the county school board, jurors said.

One of the "over-riding problems" in the county's school systems (where bond issues have repeatedly failed to pass) "is the need for better understanding on the part of both school people and parents," jurors said.

"Greater efforts should be expended by all school districts to establish two-way communication within their respective areas."

These people made up grand jury committees

List of 1970 Santa Cruz County Grand Jury Committees:

Education, School and Libraries — Chairman Donald T. Clark, Mrs. Judith Ann Webber and Raymond Vigil, all of Santa Cruz, and Aubrey R. Bonham of Boulder Creek.

Audits and Finance — Chairman Edward P. Prindle and Louis H. Andersen, both of Santa Cruz; Joseph E. Stagnaro of Soquel and Isaac Bonora of Aptos.

County Offices and Administration — Chairman Louis R. Keller of Santa Cruz; Charles Crouch of Aptos, and John R. Montanari and Aubrey R. Bonham, both of Boulder Creek.

Law Enforcement — Chairman John J. DuFour of Watsonville; Louis H. Andersen and John R.

Bowen of Santa Cruz and Joseph E. Stagnaro of Soquel.

Highways, Roads and Water Conservation — Chairman James R. Wylie and Isaac Bonora of Aptos; Lawrence A. Langston and Mrs. Judith Ann Webber of Santa Cruz.

Health, Welfare and Hospitals — Chairman Ralph Bargetto of Soquel; John R. Montanari of Boulder Creek and Charles Crouch.

Public Buildings and Properties — Chairman James F. Conover, Lawrence A. Langston, John R. Bowen and Raymond Vigil, all of Santa Cruz.

Special Hospital Committee Report — Chairman Edward P. Prindle, Louis R. Keller and John E. Nohrden of Santa Cruz; Ralph Bargetto of Soquel and William J. Meidl of Watsonville.

