

Library gets another week to find funds

Libraries 1980-1989

SANTA CRUZ — The Freedom branch of the Santa Cruz city-county library system was given another reprieve Tuesday by the county board of supervisors.

At the same time, the board heard a proposal from Supervisor Dan Forbus that it put a measure on the June ballot to raise money to pay for building new libraries in Live Oak and Boulder Creek.

If the board goes along with Forbus' suggestion — it will be considered again next week — it would be the first such measure tried in Santa

Related story on Page 4B

Cruz County since passage of Proposition 13 two years ago. Under provisions of Proposition 13, it would have to be approved by two-thirds of the electorate.

Forbus said he estimates it would cost \$1.5 million to get land for, build and furnish the two "regional" libraries.

He said he didn't know how much extra tax it would take to raise that much money, but figured it shouldn't be more than a "few cents" per \$100 of assessed valuation.

But County Auditor Art Merrill said after Tuesday's meeting that Proposition 13 does not allow the measure to be based on a property tax. Merrill said it would have to be set up so that every house would be assessed a fee for library service, although the fees would be collected with tax payments.

Forbus, who suggested that the library assessments be collected for just two years and then "self-destruct," admitted he has no answer to the question of where money would be found to operate the new libraries once they are built.

The lack of money to keep libraries open is what has put the Freedom branch in a bind. Last week the board voted 3-2 to keep the branch open until the end of June, instead of forcing it to close last Friday, so it can find a way to operate independently of the county. But there was one vote lacking to approve the transfer of funds to accomplish that.

The transfer issue was before the board again Tuesday, and if it had fallen short the Freedom library would have been closed immediately.

Instead, the supervisors, at Chairman Pat Liberty's suggestion, gave the library at least one more week of life because its supporters will be meeting tonight with the Pajaro Valley school board to discuss putting the library under the wing of the school district.

It was Mrs. Liberty, along with Supervisor Marilyn Liddicoat, who blocked the transfer of funds a week ago. Both claimed the move would be unfair to other branch libraries, which have had to drastically alter their operations because of the loss of county funding.

Tuesday Mrs. Liberty won board support to have the county administrative staff look into having the Ben Lomond branch — one of those staying open with volunteers since the cutback — follow a course similar to Freedom's, and join forces with the San Lorenzo Valley school district.

Mrs. Liddicoat, too, had no objections to keeping the Freedom library open another week pending the outcome of discussions with the Pajaro schools.

Mercury

3/5/80