

Charter

Supervisors avert eyes from proposed charter

By BUD O'BRIEN

Question: What's a 10-foot pole?

Answer: It's something that no member of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors will touch the proposed County Charter with.

At least that's the collective impression given by the five board members when they're asked for their reactions to the charter that a group of citizens is hoping to put on the Nov. 6 ballot.

The proposed charter was drafted by a so-called Citizens Charter Committee, the membership of which is still largely unknown, under the sponsorship of an organization called Public Trust, which devotes itself to "conservative" causes.

The charter would radically restructure county government. Among other things, it provides for at-large election of supervisors and does away with the County Administrative Officer.

To drum up support, or at least interest, in their cause, the charter's sponsors have called for a meeting today at 10 a.m. at Aptos Seascapes to which "over 300 firms, organizations and private citizens of (the) county have been invited... for review and analysis of the charter proposal..."

How many of the more than 300 will show up is unknown, but unless they change their minds, none of the supervisors will be among them. Nor will they send representatives as they have been invited to do. Specifically, Public Trust has

invited "each member of the board to have their representative join the (charter) committee as a voting member."

Of the five supervisors, only Pat Liberty has indicated that someone representing her might be at the meeting. But she made it clear that someone won't be a formal representative, or one that would become a member of the committee.

Board Chairman Dan Forbus, who said he hasn't so much as looked at the proposed charter yet, said he wouldn't send a representative to the meeting. Supervisors Marilyn Liddicoat, Chris Mathews

and Gary Patton said the same thing.

Even those conservative board members who might be expected to be somewhat sympathetic to the charter group have thus indicated their displeasure with the venture. Forbus, Mrs. Liberty and Mrs. Liddicoat, who comprise the conservative majority, have made it clear they don't like the way the proposal evolved, shrouded as it was in secrecy and without general public input.

As things now stand, the charter group's hope that a charter proposal will be put on the ballot for the Nov. 6 election doesn't look very promising.

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