

Capitola approves library tax for November ballot

Libraries 1990-1991

by Robert Airoidi

Capitola Courier

While negotiations continue for Capitola to join the Santa Cruz County library system, the Capitola City Council has approved putting a sales tax initiative on the November ballot.

Measure L, if approved, would raise as much as \$5.3 million yearly for the library system. The council could have refused to have put the measure on the ballot, and Capitola voters could reject it in November.

However, if the measure passes countywide, the tax would still be collected in Capitola, with no money going to the city.

Capitola Mayor Margaret Fabrizio said all cities in the

county are in the same bind. Scotts Valley City Councilwoman Gina Koshland was more direct, calling it "blackmail" — a tax for the county's general fund, not a tax for the libraries. Future boards are not legally bound to uphold this board's intentions.

The quarter-cent tax, if approved, would not take effect until 1997 when an existing half-cent sales tax for earthquake repairs expires.

The proposed tax, like the earthquake tax, is framed as a general tax rather than a tax dedicated to a specific purpose. Because of this framing, a simple majority is required for passage rather than a two-thirds majority.

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Backers of the measure describe the lack of support as posturing for better negotiations,

while detractors are worried about the loophole that allows the money to be used for other

purposes.

However, supporters have pointed out, it works both ways.

The cities who pass and collect the tax are not bound to use the money specifically for library purposes.

Capitola City Councilman Bob Garcia said, "I don't think we're being asked to buy a pig in a poke. We're being asked to garner and split revenue. We may keep that money and use it for our own library."

Councilman Ron Graves said he was concerned that the county would pull back its original funding, thereby forcing the library system back to status quo.

However, co-chairman of Yes on L/Save the Libraries Committee Dan Haifley said, "18,000 people signed petitions, wrote letters and made phone calls supporting the library. Those 18,000

by the California Assembly last month; however, it will be reconsidered in August.

In addition, Assembly Bill 1905 cleared a major hurdle last month, narrowly making it out of committee. This bill would allow the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors to take \$1 million in property taxes from 10 special districts and spend it on library services over the next three years.

Last year supervisors chose to take \$928,000 from five water districts, two sanitation districts and the Santa Cruz County Port District.

City Manager Susan Westman

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- Capitola City Councilman Bob Garcia

are going to make sure those funds are spent on the library."

Capitola Councilwoman Stephanie Harlan said the residents of Capitola passed the earthquake tax, and added, "I'll also."

Another funding source being considered is one allowing communities to adopt special parcel taxes. Like a similar bill that kept Santa Cruz County libraries afloat last year, one was defeated

said there is nothing to prevent the city from using the money for its own library or for anything else.

By now, however, Capitola city officials had hoped to have reached an agreement with the five-member oversight committee.

The committee currently includes two county supervisors, two Santa Cruz City Council members, and one resident.