

Pajaro School Trustees Agree To Seek Override In Face Of Financial Woes

By Kevin Buey
Sentinel Staff Writer

Trustees, under pressure from teachers for salary increases, agreed on the need of a bond election at a special meeting of the Pajaro Valley Unified School district last night in Watsonville.

The trustees, whose district faces a 1967-68 deficit of between \$500,000 and \$800,00, decided in favor of at least an 80 cent tax override after hearing reports from Dr. James Runge, district superintendent, and James Burns, district business manager, and reviewing the report of a special steering committee headed by Judge Harry Brauer.

The committee favored trying to run the district for another year without the tax increase. Major factor in favoring the continuance un-

der the present situation was the defeat of a similar bond by the voters last June.

Dr. Runge presented two projected budgets calling for teacher's salary increases.

The first called for a \$1.35 tax override for one year to finance the deficit.

The second, which was accepted more readily by the trustees, called for only an 80-cent override.

The second projected budget was for a 7 per cent salary increase over approximately three years. The budget was for \$7,518,904. The proposed income was \$6,793,240. The 80-cent override, according to Runge, would be continuous.

In presenting the projected budgets, Runge emphasized that the trustees must continue to strive for the passage

of the tax increase, or the district will be forced to cut programs in the schools to make up the deficit. It was brought out that another bond defeat might possibly result in some curtailment of transportation facilities, among other things.

The projected budgets called for an additional 10 teachers in the next year to make up for the increase in the number of students. Some 600 students are expected to enroll in the freshman class at Watsonville High school next year, which indicates the need for the increase of funds.

After some deliberation among the trustees, another special meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, December 27, at noon. Only five of the seven trustees indicated they will attend, as two have previous engagements.

The purpose of the upcoming meeting is to discuss the resolution of the election and when it will be presented to the voters.

Dr. Runge indicated that March 14 probably would be an ideal time, as it is a week before the schools recess for spring vacation.

Dr. Janet Bell, board chairman, agreed with Runge, adding that it might possibly be detrimental to the cause to move the election back, as it would then fall too close to the date when federal income tax returns are due.

Runge emphasized that the projected budgets do not make a reduction in the quality of the program and the jobs being done in the Pajaro district.

Runge presented a study showing the relationship of teacher's salaries in the Pajaro Valley district to those in other

comparable districts, concluding that Pajaro salaries are below average.

He pointed out the job being done in Watsonville is above average, that other districts are in poorer shape, and, "We don't have to apologize for what is going on in Watsonville."

"We are operating a tight ship now," Dr. Runge said in relationship to the current financial situation of the district.

His feelings were seconded by trustee Al Miguel, who added, "As we pull in tighter, we get on thin ice."

Dr. Runge also presented a study of the Pajaro district related to districts in both Santa Clara and Alameda counties. He concluded that the tax effort was considerably less in the Pajaro district than those in Alameda and Santa Clara counties.

The trustees believed that it is essential that the public be well informed of the consequences that might result if tax override is defeated again.

It was mentioned that the present staffs would be able to take the increase in students, but that the result probably would be double sessions or over-crowded classrooms.

The meeting ended on a humorous note when the trustees were advised to bring their lunch to the December 27 meeting, as the cafeteria in the Board of Education office would not be opened on that day.

Dr. Runge added, jokingly, "We're trying to save money."