

# Library service cuts loom as CSA hopes fade

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A resolution by the Santa Cruz library system's board of directors last night puts the county Board of Supervisors on notice that unless a tax-assessment system is set up to help pay for library services, those services will continue to deteriorate.

The library board and other political entities face rough waters in the wake of the storm of protest over the County Service Area structure set up to improve and broaden county law enforcement.

The supervisors ultimately retracted the CSA and the tax surcharges that went with it.

Last night's resolution was intended to stress the need for library funding, the political climate notwithstanding.

The board this year authorized cuts of 45 percent in the library's book budget under the assumption that spending level would be restored after one year through establishment of a County Service Area.

Such a vehicle would enable the Board of Supervisors to assess property owners fees to help pay for library services. The CSA is scheduled for consideration by the board Dec. 9. It would have to be set in place before the end of the year to be considered during next year's budget sessions.

Considering the public uproar which led to abolishment last week of the law-enforcement CSA, however, things don't look good for the library.

Without increased funding, Library Director Anne M. Turner said, more budget cuts will come.

"Next year, we are going to be faced with choosing which branches we are going to close, which hours we are going to cut, which staff we are going to lay off," she said.

Discussed in lieu of a service area was the possibility of a bond issue, which would require a two-thirds vote.

Board Chairman Sara Bunnett was optimistic the public would agree to a library service area if fees were reasonable. "I think there is every indication that it could fly, provided it was assessed properly."

A major problem with the law-enforcement CSA was its flawed assessment structure.

Another future source of fund-

ing is an anticipated increase in assessed valuation brought by new property development.

However, Turner said money to fund the improvements is slated to be collected over a long period of time. The earliest the library can expect to see some dollars from that source is 1992-93.

Meanwhile, if library services are to be maintained, she said, a budget increase of 4.5 percent will be needed to cover employees' 1987-88 salary increases.

Library trustee Hal Morris wondered how the failure of the law-enforcement CSA would affect not only a library service area, but next year's share of county funding. Without the CSA revenue, the county is likely to be in even worse shape going into next year's budget sessions, he said.

"As a gambler, I'd be willing to bet we're not going to make out as good as we did last year," he said.

Board member Robin Brooks said lack of information on size of the assessments is what led the city of Capitola to decline to join a library service area, and the library board should find out exact details of the proposed CSA assessments even though they would be set by the Board of Supervisors.

Turner said she tried to get those figures from the County Administrative Officer, but was turned away. She estimated in a staff report, though, fees should be no more than \$30 a parcel.

Supervisor Robley Levy, the county liaison person to the library board, objected on the grounds that determining the amount of fees is premature.

"If you want to pursue formation of a CSA," she said, "you are going to have to persuade the board to establish it. And given the hearings on the sheriff's fee, it's going to be a sensitive issue."

She advised Turner and the board to reiterate any information they've already given to the Board of Supervisors. Services proposed to be restored under a long-range plan for library services estimated to cost upwards of \$10.5 million should be specifically stated, she said.

"All I'm saying is, I think the CSA will go down the drain if you don't explain to the board, in terms the board will understand, exactly what the needs are."