

Charter Won't Make Ballot In November

A proposed charter drastically changing the form of county government will apparently not make the Nov. 6 ballot.

Proponents of the charter asked supervisors this morning to put the issue before voters this fall, but the board would only act to formally receive the charter, and did not take steps to allow it on the ballot.

The board has until Aug. 24 to put the charter on the ballot, however three members of the board this morning made it clear they do not like a number of provisions in the document.

It was presented by R. W. Johnson, a co-author of the charter which was commissioned by Public Trust, a conservative government watchdog group. Johnson urged the board to set an election because the charter form of government would "save the county \$3 million" a year, he said.

The charter proposal calls for seven supervisors, elected by countywide vote, as opposed to five district-chosen supervisors currently. There would be seven county departments, according to the charter, no county administrator, and the offices of treasurer and auditor would be combined.

Supervisor Gary Patton, who in a radio speech said the charter was written specifically to benefit "real estate development interests" and to do away with the county's growth

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management system, told Johnson that the charter should undergo a legal review before it was put on the ballot.

Patton reminded the charter's proponents that the charter itself recommends prior legal review and tests of initiatives.

Bob Moreland, a member of Public Trust, said the charter should be put to the vote as it was one way to resist "our giving over our birthright to state control."

Touching on Patton's earlier statement that the charter would be the end of the growth management program — because it allows the board to vote out successful initiative (Measure J created the growth management system) — Moreland said, "Measure J was not written in the county, nor for this county. It was written at the state level."

Supervisor Pat Liberty said the charter appears to give the county board power to do away with Coastal Act policies that came out of Proposition 20 seven years ago by a statewide vote.

She also said the charter's proposal to loosen the law on concealed weapons licenses did not meet with her approval.

Supervisor Chris Matthews also raised a number of questions about the charter.

Indications from board members following the meeting were that the charter would not make the Nov. 6 ballot.