

THE SENTINEL EDITORIALS

Bonds For Cabrillo

It was the unanimous decision of a county-wide citizens advisory committee that the trustees of the Cabrillo junior college district should call an election on a \$7,000,000 bond issue to finance the construction of a junior college campus.

The site of the campus has already been selected—the Porter Sesnon property in Porter Gulch in the Mid-County on the dividing line of the Santa Cruz and Watsonville high school districts.

The citizens committee based their recommendation on the basis of building a campus to house 2000 students at a cost of about \$3500 per student, an estimate already used by specialists for the Master Plan for Higher Education in California.

Regardless of what action may be taken by the college's board of governors, it seems obvious that the proposed bond issue will be somewhere around the \$7,000,000 figure.

It sounds like, and it is, a great deal of money.

It is money, however, that would be well spent in the development of the first public institution of higher education in Santa Cruz county.

And, as the committee pointed out, it is money that must be spent if we are to provide our students with an opportunity for higher education.

Under the system formerly used in Santa Cruz county, we would spend in excess of \$7,500,000 on construction costs alone to out-of-county junior colleges who would be educating our children.

California law provides that junior college education must be made available for all students who wish to attend. If you don't have your own junior college district, you are taxed to provide for the education that students from your county obtain at other junior colleges.

Last year Santa Cruz county taxpayers paid out a half a million dollars to out-of-county junior college districts to educate students from our county.

This year, this payment was avoided under terms of legislation passed at the last session of the legislature.

This year Cabrillo college is operating under make-shift conditions at the Watsonville high school, using old buildings for some classrooms and operating under an extended day program that continues to 6 p.m. and into the evening.

It was planned to handle 300 students, but there were 458 students enrolled in the day program—50 per cent higher than intitial enrollment estimates.

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We have already enrolled in our school systems twice as many first graders as we have high school seniors, so the future enrollment for the junior college district is already in our elementary schools without additional population growth in the area.

Therefore, it's rather easy to see that we need a campus that we can handle 2000 students.

The cost figure provided by the citizens' committee is on par with state prognostications. The committee, you may recall, pointed out the need for a school of medium quality construction that will fill both the housing requirements and the educational policies of our new college.

It will be some time before firm estimates on building costs and the requirements for the school can be determined although the preliminary planning has indicated a goal in line with the committee's recommendation.

It is apparent that building costs are increasing and that bond interest costs are also up although there is a possibility that the bond rate may drop next spring.

The young men and women of Santa Cruz county need an adequate junior college. They deserve and must have, the best possible educational plant that we can provide.

The proposal by the citizens' committee is well within the bonding capacity of the county-wide junior college district. It would cost the owner of a medium priced home in the \$15,000 class about a dollar a month in taxes for bonds during the first years of the bonding period and then gradually decline for the duration of the bonds.

Thus, the proposed bonding program for Cabrillo college is within the financial means of the people of Santa Cruz county.

Certainly, it would add to taxes, but it will also pay us far greater dividends than most of our investments in government. It is far cheaper for the county to educate our children at home than it is to send tax dollars into another community.

We will await further developments at the trustee level, but we believe the citizens committee has provided strong substance for their recommendations.