

The scene lasted about five minutes. Waldheim did not leave the car and was

heard all this but, believe me, seeing

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Time's running out for branch libraries

By CAROLYN
HEEBNER-SWIFT

Although branches of the city-county library system won a victory when service was resumed a year ago, it now appears the past 12 months may only have been a reprieve from the permanent closure of the Freedom, Capitola, Soquel and Ben Lomond branches.

Santa Cruz City-County library board met early this morning to review a proposal that could shut down these branches by the first of next month. And once again, the reason is the county's difficulty in financing its share of the library budget due to the passage of Prop. 13 in June, 1978.

Luther Perry, county administrative analyst, presented the details of a plan developed by the staff of the County Administrative Office, the Santa Cruz city manager and library administration. This plan will be reviewed first by the library board and then by members of the Santa Cruz City Council and county Board of Supervisors.

Perry told library trustees the county deficit may require a reorganization of the library system so that it functions at a level consistent with available funding.

In order to balance the county general fund after the enactment of AB-8 in July, the county withdrew its general fund library subsidy and then made up a portion of the loss through a special district augmentation fund. The county's share of the library budget is still some \$126,412 short of the amount needed to continue the present operation, Perry said.

Reorganization of the system is one of three options suggested to the Board of Supervisors last month. The other two were to use capital outlay funds on a one-time basis to avoid action this year, or to take funding budgeted to another department.

The cooperative study to be submitted to the city and county recognizes both the present difficulties and the anticipated problems of the next few years. At the moment, Perry said, it is only the county which faces a deficit in library funding, while the city is still able to pay its share. However, the effects of Prop. 13 are expected to create an increased deficit in city spending in the future.

Perry said if there is no action taken this year, the county will be about \$5 million short of financing next year's general fund budget. A plan to immediately cut back county operations and services will be presented to supervisors on Tuesday, and this plan will affect nearly all departments as well as the library budget.

"The simple fact facing us all is that Prop. 13 has hit the county and there simply is not enough money to continue all programs at their present levels," said the county analyst.

Perry said the county and city staff have worked together to develop a long-term library reorganization and financing plan which is based on a move toward fewer but larger libraries with a greater use of volunteers.

In his report, the analyst said the plan will reduce library costs by an estimated \$174,000, and \$127,000 of this will be the

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Branch libraries

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county's share. However, since half the fiscal year has already passed, only \$63,890 can be saved before July. The county must find another \$80,000 to meet its obligation this year.

Perry said the proposal recommends the use of a portion of the capital outlay fund in a one-time transaction to cover the transitional period. It is anticipated there will be some \$276,000 in the capital outlay fund by June — an increase of about \$70,216. This amount will supply nearly all the needed additional \$80,000.

If the city and county agree on the proposal, branch services will be limited to Aptos, Boulder Creek, Branciforte, Felton and Scotts Valley. Service will also be expanded to communities through the Bookmobile.

The small La Selva Branch library may also escape the impending closure. Perry said negotiations may be arranged with the La Selva Beach Recreation District and La Selva Beach Fire District to provide a volunteer staff to keep the branch open.

City-County Librarian Charles Atkins added the use of a volunteer staff may be possible only at the La Selva Branch because there is no regular paid staff at the library at present.

This means there will be no violation of a library policy that prohibits the replacement of paid staff with volunteers.

If the plan is executed, the Ben Lomond, Capitola, Freedom and Soquel branches will close in early February. Garfield Park will continue until July because the city is able to cover its portion of the city-county budget. And Santa Cruz may decide to continue the financing on its own in the future.

Volunteers will be increased at the Scotts Valley branch and for the Bookmobile, allowing a reduction of positions. One of two will be cut from the Bookmobile and Scotts Valley will lose a one-half position of its one and a half position staff. An additional one and a half staff will be cut in the extension division of the central library.

In conjunction with the cutbacks, the plan recommends construction of up to two new branches in the county area. These are targeted for the San Lorenzo Valley and Live Oak. The resulting concentration of services, Perry said, will provide branches within a five to ten mile radius for most county residents.

Up to one full staff position for each of the two new branches will be transferred from the library extension or the branches to be closed.

The impact of the reorganization will result in a reduction in county circulation of approximately one percent.

Perry explained that the reorganization plan will proceed under an administrative policy now under negotiation between the county council and the city attorney. The next step will be to obtain the recommendations of the city-county library board. Trustees will decide to either accept or reject the plan at the regular board meeting scheduled for 7:30 a.m. Monday.

The county analysts further assured that alternatives are being investigated. The Capitola City Council will be approached to see if it wishes to assume responsibility for the Capitola branch. The county-owned buildings will also find an appropriate use if the branches are closed, he said.

Part of the reason the plan has been suggested, he added, is that until now, the city has taken a greater role in development of the city-county budget — and the county has had an increasingly difficult time meeting its obligation.

"We are trying to move in a direction to settle differences early in the game so we can avoid a budget crisis," he said.

Trustee Mary Ann Kaplan asked how the closing of the Freedom library will affect the Watsonville Library which is run under a separate agreement. Perry answered that under the formula provided, Watsonville will be capable of serving the entire area without difficulty.

Fire calls

Aptos

6:16 p.m. Wednesday, false alarm, Camp St. Francis, San Andreas Road.

Watsonville

4:03 p.m. Wednesday, washdown, 136 West Beach St.

8:09 p.m. Wednesday, medical aid, 751 Washington St.

Freedom

2:45 p.m. Wednesday, medical aid, Airport and Freedom boulevards.

Castroville

5:10 p.m. Wednesday, medical aid, 10551 Merritt St.

Wat Reg Pazarovian 1/3/80
Cab. Green Sheet 1/5/80