

SF Supervisors Refuse To Let Voters Decide

City Hall Reporter

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors has firmly put down a proposal which would have meant the end of power for at least five persons on the eleven member body.



Terry Francois

Aug. 14, the legislators heard a proposal from Supervisor Quentin Kopp, which would have created eleven supervisorial districts in San Francisco. Supervisors are currently elected on an at large basis.

Changes in the city's election method have been kicked around for some time. However, a plan which would have retired several incumbents was too much. Five Supervisors live in one of the proposed districts, three in another.

Kopp and Supervisor John Barbagelata were the only legislators in favor of the district plan. If six Supervisors had concurred the matter would have gone before the voters in November. Approval by the voters was a strong possibility.

None of the nine legislators opposing changes alluded to this. The Supervisors who spoke against the proposal fairly tripped over their tongues in explaining their opposition.

Dianne Feinstein, wearing her shades, said there is "no conclusive evidence in support" of districts. She drew a chorus of abuse and in schoolmarm fashion reprimanded the public galleries.

Terry Francois began his dialogue with, "I'm going to state my position, I don't care who hisses." The slick legislator then said, "Minority communities are more represented on the current Board."

Francois went on to discuss the infighting which would take place if district legislators were competing for the city budget. Francois said such projects as Western Addition Redevelopment would not have taken place with district legislators. The audience hissed at the mention of Redevelopment.

Francois' truest comment concerned the number of legislators who would lose their jobs. "I think it's somewhat naive we're doing this, because five Supervisors are in one district. Any proposal which doesn't take into effect the incumbents is naive."

Next came Peter Tamaras, one of the Board's longtime incumbents. Tamaras opened with, "You heard the sincerity with which Terry Francois spoke." Tamaras called the districts "one of the most unwise plans ever presented."

Tamaras spoke of the work the Board of Supervisors has done for minorities. "They have never discriminated on this Board....We've had a very, very good Board of Supervisors....There hasn't been a scandal in 40 years....We do what we think is best for the people of every neighborhood."

At the end of his monologue, Tamaras was almost shouting, Tamaras is one of five legislators who live in the St. Francis Woods area.

Barbagelata made several remarks in favor of the districts concluding, "Let's give the people a chance to decide."

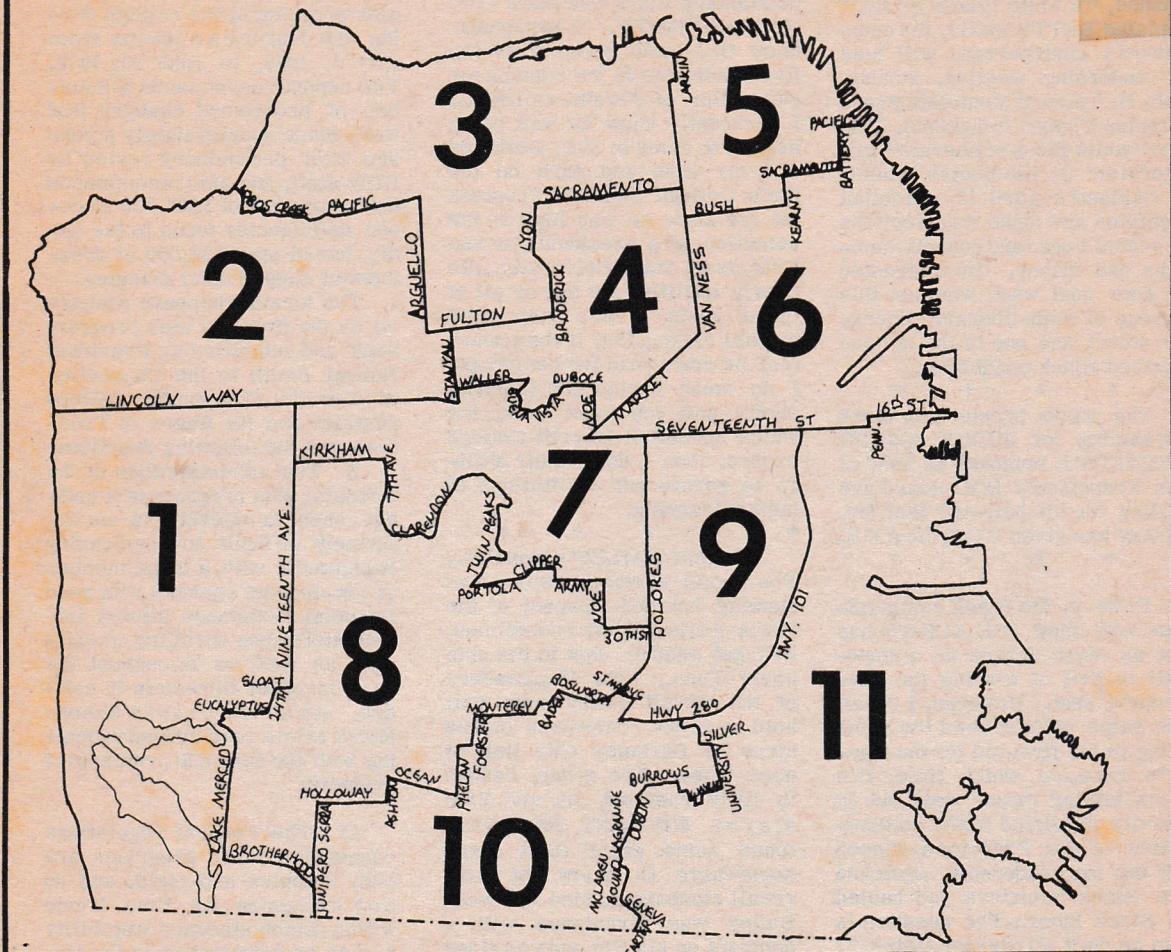
Supervisors Ronald Pelosi and Robert Gonzales rapped the proposal saying they weren't decided the voters want a change.

The Supervisors then killed the proposed ballot measure, 9-2.

SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICTS:

FEBRUARY 10, 73

PROPOSED CHARTER AMENDMENT



March 15 is a crucial day in San Francisco for followers of the political game.

This is the deadline to collect 70,000 petition signatures to force a special June election which would change the city's method of electing supervisors.

According to coordinator Calvin Welch, 4500 circulators are attempting to gather the necessary 70,000 registered voters. If successful, the city's electorate will vote on whether it wants 11 supervisorial districts. Currently, the supervisors are elected on at large basis.

Last year the supervisors rejected putting the measure on the November ballot. Their eloquent debate on an August Monday afternoon did little to cover the real reasons for not going to the voters with this proposal.

Several supervisors would lose their jobs.

Five of the city's 11 elected legislators currently live in District 8 (shown on the map). This area includes the affluent St. Francis Woods neighborhood, which indicates the kind of money needed to run for supervisor on a large basis.

Supporters of the district plan claim to represent all neighborhoods of the city. Today's supervisors were elected with substantial backing from what is euphemistically referred to as the 'downtown interests.'

A chart prepared by supporters of the district measure analyzed the prohibitive costs of running for supervisor. In 1971 Ron Pelosi spent \$86,500; Bob Mendelsohn, \$99,370; Bob Gonzales, \$54,000; Terry Francois, \$67,600, John Molinari, \$63,500 and Quentin Kopp, \$45,400. These were six winners out of a field of 30 plus candidates.

Supporters of the district

elections claims if district elections are held the Supervisors will become a powerful body. Welch said the Supervisors control the entire city budget, make laws and ordinances. Welch says the current board is subservient to a strong Mayor Alioto and follow his lead. This sort of lackeyism has infected the public which cares little for its city legislators.

The 11 supervisorial districts would undoubtedly find more minority people at City Hall. Hunters Point, Western Addition, Chinatown and Mission would have supervisorial districts.

If the measure qualifies for the ballot a substantial fight by the monied interests can be expected. With the current Board of Supervisors, and their bank rollers, understandably opposed to district elections, the proponents of change face a rough future.