

Vet Memorial Program Must Be Pared or more Funds Raised

(This is the first of two articles explaining the status of the Sonoma County Veterans' Memorials program.)

By FRED FLETCHER

A disagreement, made public this week, between two important Sonoma county veterans' committees over the division of the county's war memorial funds may be an indication of the financing headache troubling the county board of supervisors. The official Petaluma war memorial committee, a joint committee of veterans' group representatives, asked the supervisors to limit the cost of any

memorial building in the county to \$350,000.

Spokesmen for the Santa Rosa counterpart of the Petaluma committee were not pleased by this action. The Santa Rosa group is pushing a plan for a \$580,000 memorial auditorium.

BEHIND the difference is this fact, which becomes apparent in a perusal of the county's records of its 4 1/2-year-old veteran's war memorial program:

Sonoma county's program of financing memorial projects in 10 communities may cost more than \$2,000,000, while the money available and expected, accord-

ing to present plans, will amount to less than \$1,200,000.

If this is true, either more money will have to be raised, or the program will have to be pared down. Either move could be as unpopular as the other.

The county board of supervisors, which this year reduced the special tax rate for the memorial program by \$.05 per \$100 of assessed valuation, might hesitate before raising the rate again by the \$.15 to \$.20 that would be needed to bring in enough money.

On the other hand, the supervisors might be equally reluctant to reduce the size of the program, which is being strongly backed in the 10 communities.

THE PROGRAM was started April 24, 1944, when the supervisors adopted a resolution declaring their intention of levying a general tax to finance veterans' war memorial projects in various communities asking for them.

In the ensuing two years 10 projects were definitely slated for communities in Sonoma county. They will be in Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Sebastopol, Sonoma, Guerneville, Occidental, Cloverdale, Cotati, Healdsburg and Monte Rio.

Sites have been acquired for the 10 projects at a cost of approximately \$120,000. Preliminary designs of the first seven have been made by architects and accepted by the board of supervisors.

Preliminary cost estimates made for these seven projects by the architects totaled \$1,008,841. This was in June, 1946, in the case of the first six projects. The seventh estimate was made in February, 1947.

THE PROJECTS and preliminary cost estimates:

Santa Rosa, memorial auditorium; \$301,300; Petaluma, veterans' meeting building, \$244,389; Sebastopol, memorial building, \$120,660; Sonoma, memorial building, \$122,330; Guerneville, veterans' building, \$64,194; Occidental, memorial civic center, \$72,200; Cloverdale, memorial building, \$83,768. Total, \$1,008,841.

(Plans for a Cotati memorial civic center structure and a Monte Rio memorial are not yet in. Healdsburg's memorial, an aquatic park, has been purchased, and an architect is working up plans for remodeling a building on the property.)

After preliminary plans for the first seven had been accepted, the supervisors ordered final working blueprints. Meanwhile,

they had started a financing program.

In the 1944-1945 budget, they allowed \$35,000 for the program. This was not spent that year but was added to a \$65,000 allotment in the 1945-1946 budget.

The next year, they set up a special war memorial fund under provisions of the California Veterans and Military Code and in that budget, for 1946-1947, established a tax rate of \$.25 per \$100 of assessed valuation.

They raised \$190,337 through this tax, and at the end of the fiscal year voted to continue the tax in 1947-1948, "and for an additional 3-year period to complete a 5-year financing program."

JUST HOW much money the tax will have raised by that time depends, of course, upon the county's assessed valuation each year as well as the tax rate the supervisors choose to fix for the memorial program.

The tax rate this year has been reduced from the 1947-1948 25 cents to the 1948-1949 (present) 20 cents. It is expected to raise \$201,717, according to the budget.

Adding this to the annual revenue of the previous four years gives a total of \$712,286 that will have been raised by June 30, 1949.

(The amounts raised each year for the program: 1944-1945, \$35,000; 1945-1946, \$65,000; 1946-1947—first special tax year—\$190,337; 1947-1948, \$220,232; 1948-1949—this year—\$201,717. Total, \$712,286.)

ASSUMING the supervisors will go back to the 25-cent me-

morial tax rate for the next two years, 1949-1950 and 1950-1951, which will complete the existing program, the total amount that will have been raised by June 30, 1951, is \$1,162,286.

(This is based on an unchanged assessed valuation bringing in, in round numbers, \$225,000 annually over the two final years.)

While several supervisors have indicated that the 10 projects in the memorial program were to cost \$1,500,000, it would be reasonable, on the basis of these estimates, to expect no

more than a total revenue of \$1,200,000 by the end of the financing program in 1951.

Moreover, construction costs have soared since cost estimates on the first seven projects were made two years ago.

Working plans for the Santa Rosa structure were submitted July 23, 1948. The new cost estimate was \$580,000, compared to \$301,300 two years ago.

THIS IS AN increase of 90 per cent in the estimated cost of the same building in two years. Applying this percentage (which, of course, may be high-

er than the average) to the preliminary estimates for all seven (\$1,008,841) gives approximately \$908,100.

Adding the two figures together makes a sum of \$1,917,041 as an up-to-date cost estimate for the seven buildings.

About \$160,000 already has been spent on sites and designs, and three projects still have designs to be accepted. Assume the latter will give cost estimates totaling only \$40,000.

Add the last three figures together for a rough estimate of the total cost of the entire veterans' memorial program in So-