

Mayor Shoulders Defeat of 10 Bonds

By Roger Moore
A Member of the Staff

The defeat of the 10 bond proposals can be blamed on no one but the mayor, Mayor Charles B. Wheeler, Jr., said today.

"I could have sat on my hands and not run the 10 propositions again (after they were defeated in the last bond election Dec. 18)," Wheeler said.

Wheeler joined most city officials today in lamenting the "negative period" the city appears to have entered.

The defeat of the bond issues yesterday, the teachers' strike and the decision by construction labor unions today to strike against builders were cited by Wheeler and others as examples of "negativism" that lingers in the city.

Although unofficial returns showed margins of approval for the bond issues that ranged from about 57 per cent to more than 63 per cent, Wheeler seemed unimpressed by the near-passing status of the propositions.

The mayor reflected on his pre-election predictions that more than 60,000 voters would

turn out at the polls to approve each of the 10 bond items.

"I miscalculated by about 10 per cent," Wheeler said, referring to the 55,600 voters that did turn out.

Wheeler had predicted earlier that the teachers' strike would have a 3 per cent negative effect on passage of the bonds. Today, he said the construction strike had another 3 per cent negative effect.

"And the foul-up by the election board in not notifying persons of their new polling places probably caused another 4 per cent negative factor," Wheeler said.

Reports of voters being turned away from voting locations because they were not at their regular voting stations were received throughout the day.

The mayor and other city council members indicated they had no support for resubmitting the bonds a third-time to voters in the remainder of their terms in office.

"I want to see how next year's general election turns out before running the bonds back to the voters," Wheeler said, noting that his own re-election would be decided on that March, 1975, ballot.

Most council members indicated there would be no immediate attempt to finance some of the proposed bond improvements with revenue-sharing dollars from the city's next proposed budget.

The defeated bonds made up a 7-year package. This, Wheeler said, means that at least through this year the defeat of the propositions will have no effect on the city.

Some items, such as the \$7-million bond package to buy about 5,000 acres for expansion at Kansas City International Airport and the \$10 million to finish urban renewal projects, could be affected by increasing land costs.

The mayor said the city would try again next year to get the Missouri General Assembly to ease the requirements that bonds need two-thirds of the vote cast to be approved. An effort earlier this year to lower the required majority to 60 per cent from the present 66% per cent was defeated.

The upset in yesterday's election makes it even more important that the teacher and construction worker strikes are resolved swiftly, Wheeler said.

Robert Kipp, city manager,

said the defeat of the bonds makes it obvious that the public education crisis is a public priority.

"It is obvious that the public feels the needs of public education are at this point more important than the city's capital improvement needs," he said.

The manager said he did not consider the bond upset a cause of further drains on the city's already tight budget.

The manager said he did not agree that the city was entering a "negative period."

"I feel that we always gain by some setbacks," he said. "What is important is that we have a very viable civic leadership that can help us solve these problems."

The labor disputes with the school board and builders can not be given all the credit for the defeat, although each apparently had some negative effects, Kipp said.

Kipp's proposed city budget for the next fiscal year includes \$5.5 million in federal revenue-sharing money earmarked for capital improvements.

"A major portion of those funds will have to go for resurfacing city streets," he said.

A re-evaluation of how the remaining funds will be spent has to be made before it is determined whether they will be used to finance a part of the improvements that would have been paid for with the bonds.

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