COMMITTEE TO SEEK COMPROMISE ON CIVIC CENTER DEVELOPMENT

Three major events took shape at a hearing involving the development of the controversial civic center area.

1) There will be no muffler factory north of the swimming pool as originally intended.

2) A committee has been appointed to work out a compromise agreement on the development of the 50-acre area for industrial or park use, in order to break the present deadlock on the all-or-nothing-at-all policy.

3) Condemnation proceedings on 50 acres of the industrial property still continue in force.

The three-hour meeting was sparked by testimony both for and against the recreational or industrial development of the area.

At one point Councilman Nick Drale threatened unsuccessfully to unseat Albert Isen as mayor.

Named To Committee

Named by Mayor Isen to the committee were Herma Tillim, president of the Parks and Recreation committee: Bert Lynn, president, Planning Commission; John J. Fitzgerald, 1122 Maple ave., Torrance resident; F. W. Mill, representing the Torrance Industries Tax committee; A. E. (Tommy) Thompson, president of the Chamber of Commerce; and the mayor.

Councilmen Nick Drale and Willys Blount opposed the mayor's appointments.

Drale objected to the mayor's serving on the committee, while Blount objected because condemnation proceedings against the 50-acre site still continued in force. He also indicated earlier that he preferred to have each councilman appoint individual members of the committee.

Appointment of the committee came as a substitute motion by Councilman Bob Jahn to a motion made by Blount that condemnation proceedings be dropped.

Purpose of the committee, according to Jahn, is to meet with Santa Fe, owners of the land, in order to work out a satisfactory solution whereby the city would acquire a buffer strip for the civic center for park purposes at a reasonable price and Santa Fe would get acceptable use for the remaining industrial property.

Councilman Victor Benstead joined Jahn and Isen in approving the appointments, stating that he is not afraid of the park program, indicating that there had also been opposition in the past to formation of the Metropolitan Water District and the new civic center.

No Muffler Factory

City Manager George Stevens informed the council that Belond Manufacturing co. has decided against building a muffler factory on its 10-acre civic center site because of the controversy.

Among those speaking in favor of the park development were Rev. H. Milton Sippel of the First Christian church; Vickie Feldon, president of the Torrance Art group; J. A. Beasley, civic leader; Mrs. Herma Tillim, president of the Parks and Recreation commission, and others.

Proponents of the park program indicated that they favored the development of area parks as well as one adequate central park.

Isen indicated that he hoped the civic center area would include a central library, youth and adult recreation buildings, little theatre building, post office, children's recreation area and stadium.

Opposed To Park Plan

James Hall, former city attorney, spoke against the central park proposal, asking where the city was going to get the money.

He estimated the area would cost $100,000 to maintain.

Mayor Isen said this was a long-range program.

Fred Mill, representing the Torrance Industries Tax committee, pointed out that the area in question had a potential tax valuation of $5 million and that it could cost the city hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in lost tax revenue.

He pointed out that National Supply, located on 34 acres, pays the city and school district nearly a quarter of a million dollars in taxes.

Councilman Drale read from a confidential report filed with the city by an appraiser, saying that the market value of the land at the time of the condemnation was $18,500 an acre, and the opinion of the appraiser that no court would render a judgment less than $1 million for the site.

Mayor Challenged

Drale also challenged Isen's remarks that the program was a long range measure.

"When you condemn property, you have to put the cash up," Drale declared. The city doesn't have a million dollars to buy the land, he said.

Drale pointed out that the present combined tax rate for Torrance is a little over $8, and that a recent school override of 75 cents, plus a bond issue of $8 million needed to develop park properties would put the taxes up to nearly $9.

After Isen's retorts to Drale's comments, including a statement that Drale "can work faster than IBM," Dale threatened to call for a "division of the house," and remove Isen as chairman. The threat was not carried out however.

Electrical Week Marks Achievements

The electrical industry was saluted for providing "an era of unparalleled comfort and luxury" for everyone in a proclamation issued by Mayor Albert Isen, designating the week of February 10-16 as "Electrical Week."

This week marks the 110th anniversary of the birth of Thomas A. Edison, and the 77th year since his invention of the first practical incandescent lamp launched a new era in American life.

As the mayor commended the industry for past accomplishments, G. L. Blanchard, Southern California Edison co., district manager, predicted even more startling progress in the future.

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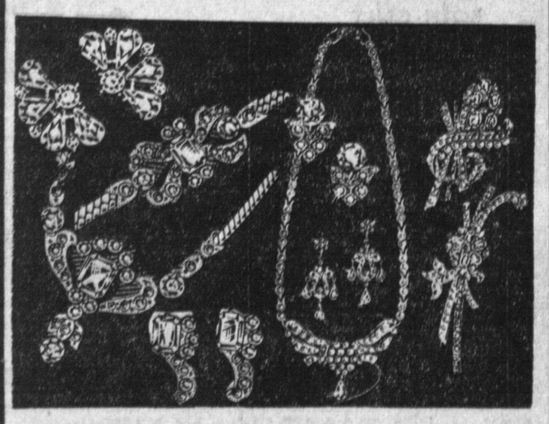

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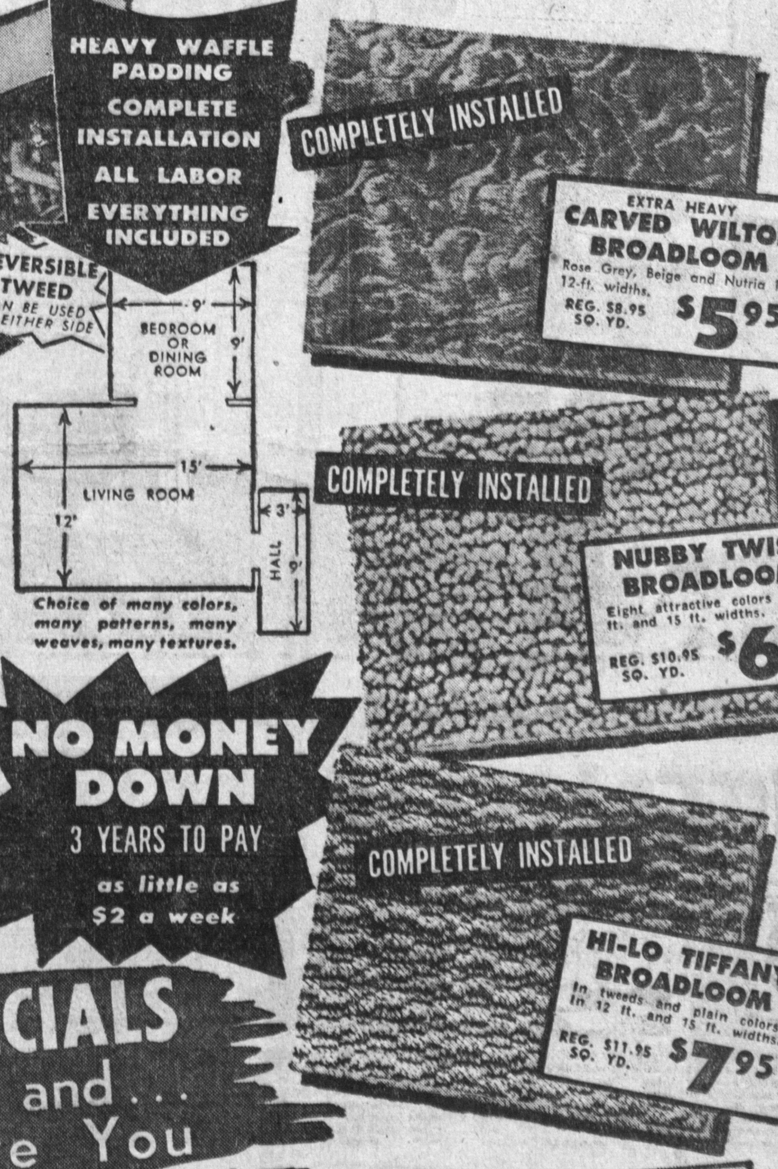

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