by Hans von Spakovsky

The launch date of NASA's Space Shuttle may be postponed until January 1980, at the least. The date is currently the first week in November 1979. This information came from a reliable source associated with the shuttle program who requested anonymity. The source reported that the date has already been unofficially delayed.

Although there have been reported problems with the shuttle main engines, NASA news releases and recent reports have been very optimistic, and have seemed to downplay the significance of these problems. With a manned launch less than a year away, the program is behind schedule, according to the source, and is not in the state of readiness that the Saturn program was at any time (all major tests having been completed). To date, there has not been a single completed test of the three main shuttle engines. Each full test has been shut down prematurely due to some malfunction or another. With a goal of 50 seconds of burn, the longest test so far has run for a duration of only 100 seconds.

Some of the problems with the engines, manufactured by Rockwell Corp., have been with cracked or broken blades in the high-pressure fuel turbo-pumps and fires in the oxidizer turbopumps. All the other problems and failures have been of an unpredictable nature, said the source, making it very difficult to anticipate and correct.

Concerns about these problems have led NASA to appoint a special shuttle task group, composed of the source, to look at the entire program and make absolutely certain that there are no possibilities of anything going wrong in the future, besides trying to solve present difficulties. The eighty members have been handpicked for the job. The source is one of these.

Almost all of this, however, is denied by official NASA sources. Ellery May, deputy director of the main shuttle office at the George Marshall Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Alabama, said that the November launch date still stands. "There is no possibility of anything going wrong in the near future," he said. "In the past, trying to solve present difficulties. The eighty members have been handpicked for the job. The source is one of these.

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Council sustains Preusser motion

By Eric Starkman

The Cambridge City Council, on Monday night, challenged the constitutionality of a state law requiring a three-fourths majority to approve a zoning ordinance opposed by an owner of 20 percent or more of the land in an area. Although there have been continuous delays in the way of jobs and taxes in this city."

Douglas Randall, a legal advisor to the city, told the council he believed it should "proceed to deal with the motion in its merits." He said the motion only wants to correct the record, not change the rules. Randall said the three-fours majority provision has never been tested in the courts. Massachusetts is the only state that has such a provision.

Preusser heralded the council's decision as "one of the most significant things that have ever happened to this council in recent history" and she "was pleased to be a part of it."

Councillor Kevin Crane said he opposed the ordinance because "it is difficult for the city of Cambridge their right to the constitutional right to the equal protection of the laws."

Preusser's order states that the customary two-thirds majority is sufficient to pass a zoning ordinance, but that the state law requiring a three-fourths majority to approve an ordinance opposed by an owner of 20 percent or more of the land in an area is unconstitutional, "in that it denies certain inhabitants of the city of Cambridge their right to the equal protection of the laws." This right is guaranteed under the 14th Amendment.

Preusser ordered the council to vote on a modified ordinance on Tuesday night. The ordinance making a seventh affirmative vote necessary. The council sustained the ordinance on a 5-4 majority an order by Councillor Mary Ellen Preusser. The order argued that the state law requiring a three-fourths majority to pass a zoning ordinance opposed by an owner of 20 percent or more of the land in an area is unconstitutional, "in that it denies certain inhabitants of the city of Cambridge their right to the equal protection of the laws."

The question of pass/fail and the council sustained the ordinance on a modified vote of 5-4. Preusser's order states that the customary two-thirds majority is sufficient to pass a zoning ordinance. Although there have been continuous delays in the way of jobs and taxes in this city.

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