

# Aptos cityhood backers say LAFCO is dragging its feet

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SANTA CRUZ — Supporters of cityhood for Aptos charged the Local Agency Formation Commission with “stonewalling” on the issue Wednesday.

“They’ve been stonewalling all along,” said Doug McConnell, director of Aptos Incorporation Group, which supports making Aptos a city of about 18,000 residents.

“This has been going on for four-and-a-half years.”

Approximately 30 Aptos residents and cityhood backers spoke at a meeting of LAFCO, the independent body that decides on the jurisdiction and boundaries of local governments.

Residents who addressed the

commission said they wanted Aptos residents to vote on cityhood.

“I’m a little perplexed on the time it’s taken to resolve this issue and put Aptos’ incorporation on the ballot,” Jim Kelland, attorney for the group, told the commission.

“We should have the right to vote on it,” Kelland said.

Another Aptos resident, Walter Kramer, said, “They can vote in the USSR and we can’t vote here in Aptos.”

But Supervisor Gary Patton, a LAFCO member, said that according to state law there doesn’t have to be ballot at all.

He said an environmental study — which has been the subject of debate — is required under state law if incorporation significantly

affects an area.

However, the Aptos Incorporation Group, which must pay for the report, has said an environmental study would be too expensive. And Kelland said that LAFCO could decide to not require such a study.

A low bid of \$94,282 has been received to conduct the study.

Attorneys for the Aptos incorporation group have argued with commission attorneys in court three times to reduce the range — and the cost — of the report.

But each time, Superior Court Judge Tom Black has sent the issue back to both parties to resolve.

On July 18, Black requested that both sides return to court Oct. 10 with legal briefs on whether Black has the authority to determine the report’s scope.