

# City of Aptos would have to run a tight ship

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Incorporation of Aptos appears to be financially feasible, but it would have to be a frugal operation, a consultant who is making a cityhood feasibility study said last night.

"I don't think there's a lot of extra money in (the projected budget)," Bill Zion told 100 people at a meeting sponsored by the Aptos Council of Improvement Associations at Rio del Mar School. Zion and leaders of the incorporation

drive spoke briefly, then answered questions for more than an hour.

Zion, of Lafayette, said he had worked on the study, but isn't finished. It's one of the last requirements of cityhood advocates, organized as the Aptos Incorporation Group, before county officials decide whether an incorporation election will be held.

Zion said he expected to come up with slightly different projections from those of Walt Keiser, a consultant who prepared a preliminary study last

year that determined there was no "fatal flaw" in the concept of incorporation.

The Incorporation Group used Keiser's report as the impetus for its drive. The group gathered more than 3,000 signatures to send the matter to the Santa Cruz County Local Agency Formation Commission. LAFCO will consider Zion's report, then make one of its own before deciding whether the issue should go on the ballot.

Zion said there are some key decisions on government spending that will have to be

addressed if Aptos becomes a city.

Those include such major expenditures as police protection, road maintenance, and parks.

The budget drawn by Keiser last year calls for expenditures of \$4.1 million in the first year of the city, including \$1.28 million for police and \$900,000 for road maintenance. The current plan is to contract with the Sheriff's Office for police services, although the possibilities of Aptos setting up its own force or contracting with Capitola will also be explored.

The proposed budget calls for doubling the current level of police protection and nearly doubling the road-maintenance program.

Incorporation Group officials reiterated last night what they've been saying since their drive started in 1987: The county government can't serve Aptos' needs as well as a city could, and there's no intention of changing the area's character.

Buzz Haines, a leader of the

group, said county government has "a planning department that doesn't plan" and "a public works department that works elsewhere."

The cityhood backers got a challenge from Dave Boggini, retired deputy city manager of San Jose, who lives in Seacliff.

Boggini said it's "generally held" that bedroom communities don't do well financially, adding that some cities have gone broke.

One of the incorporation proponents, Terry Stigall, who is the finance director for the city of Watsonville, said city governments are in better financial condition than counties.

"They (cities) are not going broke," Stigall said.

Boggini said industrial development, which Aptos doesn't have, is important to cities.

Stigall countered by saying that industrial development means jobs, but added, "industry uses more funds than go back."

Stigall also pointed out that the proposed city would get about \$820,000, or 15 percent of its revenue, from sales tax.

Boggini, who spoke several times during the meeting, warned that there could be pressure from the citizens to spend more money on services and from employees who want higher pay.

"The cost of city government is very high," Boggini said. "I'm not sure you're covering all the bases."

LAFCO is drawing guidelines for the feasibility study and expects to have them ready by its April meeting. Zion's study and LAFCO's response will follow, and then public hearings will be held.

An election could be held in November, but only if a number of deadlines are met promptly. Otherwise, it would probably come in spring 1990.

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WATSONVILLE  
Register-PAJA  
March 16, 1988

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