

Aptos cityhood backers await feasibility study

By JENNIFER SASSEEN
STAFF WRITER

Aptos incorporation efforts appear to be at a standstill, but a spokesman for the group backing cityhood said he doesn't think interest has fizzled out.

The reason for the Aptos Incorporation Group's lack of progress is that it's still waiting for a feasibility study, said attorney Kelly Walker, an Aptos resident who acts as spokesman for the group. The consultant working on the study, which will outline how a city of Aptos would survive financially, was expected to complete it in July. Now Walker said he's hoping to get the study by the end of this month.

One reason for the delay is that the consultant at first charted the finances of an Aptos city according to a 2 percent growth rate, which was higher than the incorporation group wanted, Walker said. The consultant, Bill Zion of Lafayette, was told to reduce the growth rate projection to 1.5 percent, or half of the county's current 3 percent for the area, Walker said.

Until cityhood backers have the study in hand, talking about the benefits of incorporation doesn't mean much to residents who object that it would cost them more in taxes, or that it would lead to more development, Walker said. The study will give backers "something concrete" on which to base their arguments, he said, and they'll start an educational campaign as soon as they get it.

The Aptos Incorporation Group will also have to raise some more money to pay for the study. The group has paid \$3,000 so far, but Walker said he expects another bill for \$4,000 and the group has

only about \$1,000 in its bank account.

Apparently, the group's attempts to sell "immortality" for a donation of \$500 or more didn't cause any rush on local banks.

"We all dream of immortality, but few of us have any hope of making that a reality," began a letter backers sent out some time ago to entice donors.

The letter went on to explain that the immortality the group was talking about consisted of preserving donors' names on bronze plaques. Backers promised to place the plaques in an as-yet-nonexistent Aptos Town Hall.

Walker said he didn't know how many people responded with donations, but it wasn't many.

"I don't believe we're going to have to have a very tall Town Hall to put all the names up and down it," he said. "I think just a one-story building will be enough."

As to the group's promise to soon release the names of contributors to the incorporation effort, provided they give their consent, Walker said that still stands. The list will either be released in conjunction with the feasibility study, or earlier, he said.

The group was criticized when members at first refused to reveal contributors, on grounds it was not a legal requirement at this point. Members later capitulated to a degree, stating they would release the names of contributors, but only with those contributors' consent.

Not all the contributors have been contacted yet, Walker said, but he expects all but a couple to grant the group permission to use their names.