

# Aptos-La Selva fire merger in doubt

## Annexation ruling worries fire directors

By MARK BERGSTROM

Sentinel Staff Writer

APTOS — Consolidation of the Aptos and La Selva Beach fire districts would be in jeopardy if the Local Agency Formation Commission refuses to annex 1.3-square miles of land in between.

"This is a very serious problem. It could blow us out of the water," said Dick Deuschler, chairman of the Aptos Fire District Board of Directors. State law requires fire district boundaries to be contiguous for consolidation.

LAFC has come up with an idea of its own — to allow the annexation of Highway 1 between the two districts to give a thin, contiguous border — but Aptos Fire Directors say that would be unacceptable because it would still isolate the land in between.

Fire district directors charged Tuesday night that the five-member LAFC board, which includes county Supervisors Robley Levy and Gary Patton, is refusing the annexation as a means of stopping growth.

At a LAFC meeting last week, Patton and Levy argued the merger would extend so-called urban services to that land, thereby increasing the pressure for development. Some of the property owners also objected on the same grounds.

LAFC Executive Director Pat McCormick says the land in question is about 20 percent agricultural and the rest designated rural-residential.

Fire district directors countered that the county's urban services line is different from fire district boundaries, so the annexation would have no effect.

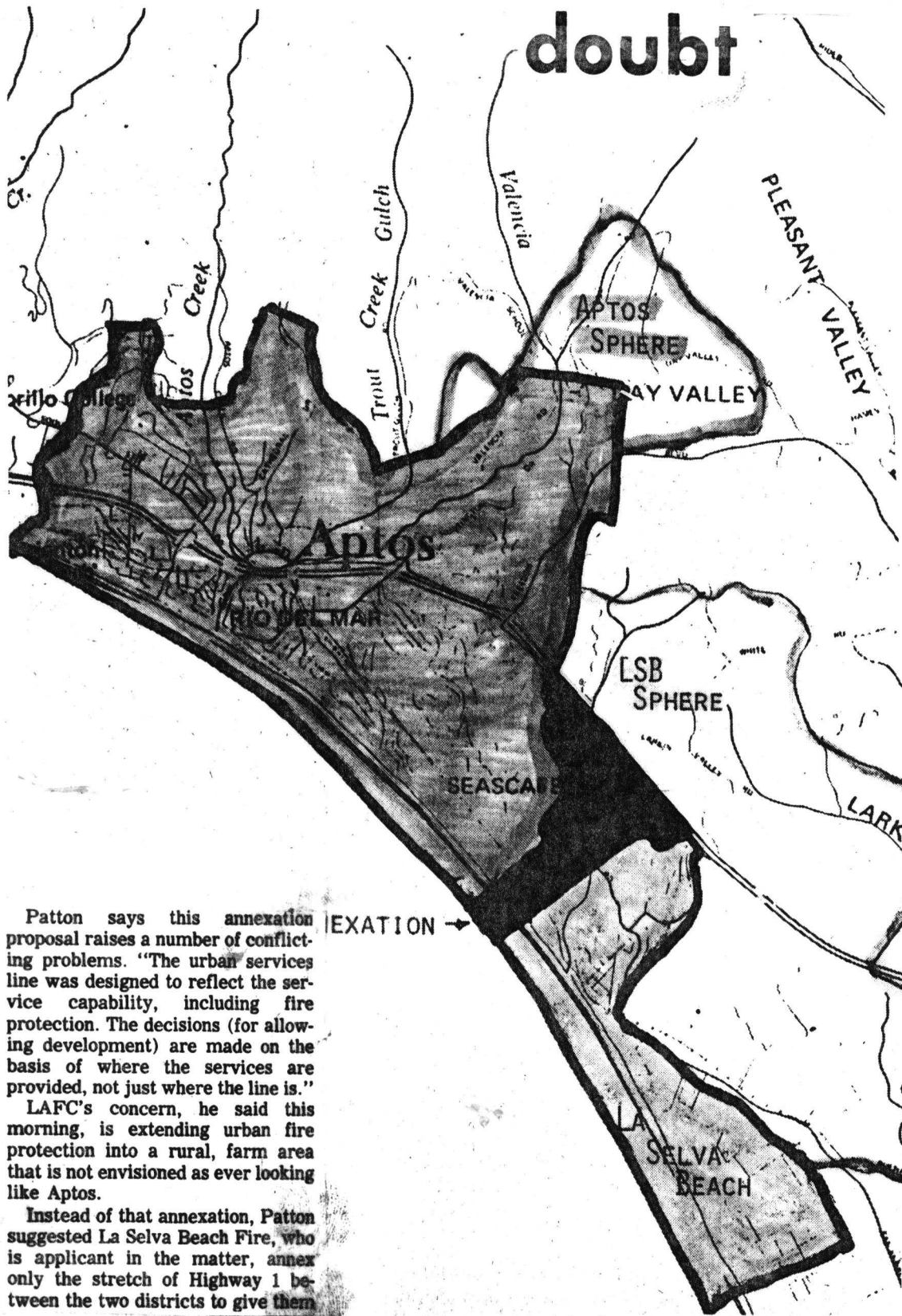
The Board of Supervisors drew up urban services lines when they implemented Measure J, a growth-control measure approved by county voters in 1978. The idea was to encourage development in areas with available services. Only the Board of Supervisors can change the urban services line.

"We're talking fire protection and they're talking land use. I see no connection," Chief Al Forbes told fire directors.

"We can't possibly change land use," said Director Stuart Davis. "I'd like to know on the issue of fire protection why they don't think it (annexation) would be a good idea."

"Salsipuedes (Fire District) is 80 percent agricultural. So is Aromas and Freedom," said Director Walter Jordan.

McCormick of LAFC says the issues raised in this proposed annexation are different from those raised elsewhere. "The major criteria in the past was based on fire department response time — where the closest fire house was."



Patton says this annexation proposal raises a number of conflicting problems. "The urban services line was designed to reflect the service capability, including fire protection. The decisions (for allowing development) are made on the basis of where the services are provided, not just where the line is."

LAFC's concern, he said this morning, is extending urban fire protection into a rural, farm area that is not envisioned as ever looking like Aptos.

Instead of that annexation, Patton suggested La Selva Beach Fire, who is applicant in the matter, annex only the stretch of Highway 1 between the two districts to give them

Dark shading shows area not included in merger

contiguous borders and allow consolidation.

"That would create an island (of the land in question)," said Deuschler. "He's drawing up islands that we couldn't," the fire district chairman added. "If we would have drawn that map LAFC wouldn't have even taken our money (application fee)," Deuschler said.

"I've always been under the impression that LAFC was created in the first place to avoid strip annexation."

That's exactly what this would be."

It's true, Patton said, that such annexation would go against LAFC policy of not creating islands. But, he said, there are many policies to be considered, including one of protecting prime agricultural land.

"What we have is an unsatisfactory set of problems. That's why we made no final decision at our meeting last week," Patton said. "We want to help the fire districts, not hurt them. We think the consolidation (of the fire districts) is a good idea. But we have to decide how best to balance our concerns." LAFC, he said, will take up the matter again in September.

Since La Selva Beach Fire is applicant for the annexation, Aptos Fire directors decided that rather than comment directly to LAFC, they would communicate to La Selva Beach directors that the LAFC proposal is "totally unacceptable," in Deuschler's words.

### REFERENCE

APTOS BRANCH LIBRARY  
76 [redacted] Drive  
Aptos, California 95003  
SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL  
August 14, 1985