

# Aptos, LSB fire districts appear agreeable to JPA plans

By BOB SMITH

A joint powers agreement between the Aptos and La Selva fire districts could be signed in the next three weeks.

The 10 directors representing both fire districts met last Tuesday night to hammer out the major points of an agreement that may eventually result in a consolidation between the two agencies.

A working committee of La Selva directors Joanne Dlott and Roy Johnston and Aptos board chairman Richard Duchscher and director Stewart Davis were to meet last night to review a contract that is being modeled on a 1981 agreement between the old

Soquel and Live Oak fire districts that set up a JPA that eventually became the Central County Fire District.

If the committee approves the agreement, it will be presented to the Aptos fire board at its March 12 meeting and to the La Selva board on March 19.

The two boards met for slightly more than one hour last Tuesday and there were no major disagreements.

Duchscher seemed to set the tone at the beginning of the meeting: "If we go ahead with the JPA, we will probably consider consolidation within two years.

"We have to look forward to a merger so we want to make

sure we are putting this together properly so we can consummate the consolidation," Duchscher added.

La Selva fire chief Al Kinslow added: "I feel that the study (made by Kinslow and Aptos Fire Chief Al Forbes) should be the background for a JPA and for consolidation in one or two years."

And when Davis asked the group, "Does anyone have any problems with an ultimate consolidation," the only response came from La Selva director Bill Cameron: "No problems."

La Selva will have its fire station manned on a 24-hour-a-day, seven days a week basis by a captain and one, possibly

two firefighters. Paramedic-level emergency medical service, dispatched from Aptos' Rio del Mar fire station, will be available to the community.

La Selva residents will continue to pay a fire service fee of up to \$60 a year on a single family home.

Aptos voters approved a standby charge but it has never been collected because the state legislature has continued to provide special district augmentation funds to the fire districts throughout the state.

The directors agreed on the following points:

**Name** — The new department will be called the Aptos-La Selva Fire Department.

**Directors** — The JPA governing board will be made up of five unpaid board members, three from the present Aptos fire board and two from the La Selva Board.

The suggestion for the 3-2 split came from La Selva director Don Green. Aptos directors said they wanted to pursue the idea of, when the two districts are consolidated, having two of the five board members elected by residents in the old La Selva fire district, and the remaining three from Aptos. This, they argued, will guarantee the small community of La Selva a permanent voice in the fire district which might otherwise be dominated by

Aptos.

**Employees** — Full-time employees of the two fire districts would become employees of the joint powers agency with the right to be reemployed by the two districts if the JPA falls apart for some reason and consolidation does not take place.

Seven new firefighters will be hired under the plan submitted by Forbes and Kinslow. They would probably lose their jobs if the consolidation did not take place, directors indicated. Five of those firefighters will probably be certified paramedics who will fill the slots of Aptos paramedics who want to

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return to just being firefighters and to also allow for vacation and sick leave coverage for the present paramedics.

The remaining two new positions may be filled by new firefighters. La Selva directors wanted to know if the department will consider hiring some of the present La Selva volunteer firefighters who, under a La Selva board policy, would be in line for any permanent openings in the La Selva fire departments. Forbes said he had no objections to considering them when he knew how many non-paramedic firefighters would be hired.

La Selva volunteers — La Selva's surf rescue team would remain an active component of the merged fire department. But there was some disagreement between the two chiefs on the remainder of La Selva's volunteer firefighters. Kinslow seemed to say at one point in the discussion that there would still be volunteer firefighters in the La Selva area. "Under this arrangement, they would not respond to anything but structures (fires) or major incidents," Kinslow said.

But Forbes made it very clear to the La Selva board

members that he wants nothing to do with volunteer firefighters.

"I don't envision this as a part-paid, part-volunteer fire department, except for the surf rescue team," Forbes said, adding that the final decision will be up to the JPA board.

La Selva now depends heavily on its part-time firefighters for community protection. "If we go back to a separate department, how hard will it be to get the volunteers back again?" Kinslow asked.

Will they be willing to volunteer again, he asked.

Duchscher answered in part, remembering back to the early 1970s when Aptos went from a part-volunteer department to an all-paid department. "There were some hard feelings we went to a paid department," he told the La Selva directors. "But the guy who told them they weren't needed had all the tact of a hungry cobra."

There was one point not settled at the meeting — the color of the fire trucks.

Aptos' fire trucks and paramedic van are painted high visibility lime green.

La Selva's fire trucks are painted red and its surf rescue-emergency medical pickup is

white.

La Selva has ordered a new pumper and directors wanted to know whether to paint it red, white or lime-green.

"It costs about \$10,000 to repaint a fire truck," one La Selva director pointed out, asking whether they should change the color on the new truck now, before the manufac-

turer had painted it.

Aptos directors defended their choice of lime green.

Kinslow said he planned to put the item on La Selva's agenda at the March 19 meeting.

But as Forbes said: "I've worked for departments with red, white and yellow trucks. They all put out fires."