

# Importance Of AMBAG Pointed Out To SC Planners

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Sentinel Staff Writer

There's an AMBAG in your life, and whether you realize it or don't, the organization could have a big effect upon your ultimate well-being.

AMBAG is an acronym for Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments. The group is the designated regional planning agency for counties and cities in the Monterey Bay area. As such, it reviews many

city and county applications for federal and state grants. And while the group has no authority over any of its member cities or counties, its comments about the merits of a proposed project could influence higher-level decisions on whether the federal or state governments will help to fund that project through a grant.

That basic information was given to the city planning commission Wednesday night by Ernest H. Vovakis, AMBAG director of areawide planning, at a study session in the civic auditorium.

Then Vovakis outlined numerous planning efforts made by AMBAG to improve quality of life throughout the region as well as in Santa Cruz.

Four so-called "issue" papers developed by AMBAG were given to commissioners for study because of their relevancy to Santa Cruz. These cover water quality, land use, housing, growth and development and erosion and sediment control.

Federal and state funds for such projects will ultimately be released in support of regional plans covering these and other programs, coming from such sources as the federal Depart-

ment of Housing and Urban Development, the Housing and Community Development Act and the Office of Planning Research, Vovakis indicated.

Several times Gerald Bowden, commission chairman, asked: "Specifically, in terms of bucks, what's in it for the city of Santa Cruz to be involved with AMBAG?"

Apart from any indirect benefits resultant from regional planning, there could be direct benefits in funding if the city planned its projects to conform to regional plans ultimately developed, Vovakis brought out.

And some of the planning could have a far-reaching impact, Vovakis suggested.

For example, Bowden noted that a sewerage plan for the area developed by AMBAG might include a requirement for the city to serve the Pasatiempo and Rolling Woods sections. This would conflict with city policy to deny service until the two sections annex to the metropolis.

What would happen, Bowden asked, if that were the AMBAG plan and the city didn't go along?

Vovakis said this would not be a problem because the city plan is expected to be com-

pleted before the AMBAG plan. But he said if it were the AMBAG plan this would be considered by the state and federal agencies approached for supporting grants.

AMBAG is under a requirement to complete its water quality control plan by June next year, and it also must complete the land use and housing elements of its regional plan by the same time.

Steve Russell, Santa Cruz acting planning director, pointed out in a report that a so-called A-95 review process set up by the federal Office of Budget Management ties regional planning policies and local projects more closely together, and that the criteria set forth in a paper designated A-95 calls for local projects to be consistent with regional policy to get favorable funding decisions.

So, Vovakis said, many AM-

## Tennis Club

DANA POINT (AP) — An attorney for the Dana Strand Beach and Tennis Club in Orange County has denied charges it discriminated against a Los Angeles family because of their religion.

BAG "issue" papers have been developed and many regional policy papers will be evolved from these.

An "issue" paper sets forth an issue or problem to be resolved through ultimate policies and regional plans. The member government agencies are asked to comment on the problems, to make suggestions for their solutions. The AMBAG planning staff develops the plans for submission to the AMBAG board (which is composed of representatives of member groups). Eventually a plan is to be ratified and this then becomes the policy statement the federal and state agencies will use as calipers in measuring the merits of a proposed local

project.

To date, AMBAG has developed 15 issue papers to meet its obligations as a regional planning agency, Vovakis reported. And some of these are quite detailed.

For example, in considering the issue of septic tank pollution of water sources, AMBAG identifies 81 septic-tank problem areas in this county alone.

In other words, AMBAG is working in more ways than most people know to improve the quality of life in their areas, Vovakis said.

And Vovakis made it clear the agency would welcome the cooperative aid of the city planning commission in developing the regional plans.

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