

La Selva fire district annexation approved

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The merger of the Aptos and La Selva fire protection districts moved one step closer to reality last week.

The Santa Cruz County Local Agency Formation Commission unanimously approved a bid by the La Selva district to annex 1.3 square miles of land on both sides of Highway 1.

When completed later this fall, the annexation will clear the way for the merger of the two fire districts into a single agency.

County Supervisor Robley Levy, who had earlier opposed the annexation as originally proposed by La Selva directors, made the motion to approve the full annexation.

The motion was unanimously supported by LAFCO members,

including Supervisor Gary Patton, who last month had argued that the district should be allowed to annex only a narrow strip of state-owned land along Highway 1 and the Larkin Valley Road interchange.

The Patton proposal would have created an island of land south of the freeway and east of San Andreas Road between the two present fire districts.

Patton's proposal would have provided the legal link between the two districts necessary for a consolidation to take place, but fire officials argued that it would leave the question of responsibility for the unannexed area unclear in the minds of both residents and firefighters. Would the local department respond to emergencies, or the California Department of Forestry from

its Corralitos station?

"The (full) area proposed for annexation is logical," said Aptos-La Selva Fire Chief Al Forbes. "Its inclusion would eliminate one of the major problems of providing emergency services — who's responsible for the area?"

When the annexation is complete, everyone involved will know that Aptos-La Selva should respond to fires, auto accidents, medical emergencies and rescues on the ocean side of Highway 1.

Levy, who has been criticized for her support of the Patton motion and was heavily lobbied in the last month by fire district officials, said that most of her original concerns about the annexation have now been satisfied.

"The Aptos-La Selva consoli-

dation should be respected, and it is reasonable to support it now," Levy said, referring to LAFCO's decade-old policy of urging fire districts in the county to merge.

The two districts are now operating a combined fire department under a joint powers agreement. That agreement, however, would probably fall apart if a merger were not consummated, fire district directors have said.

Aptos and La Selva are the second pair of districts in the county to consolidate their departments. The Live Oak and Soquel districts several years ago merged their departments and then their districts, becoming the Central Santa Cruz County Fire District.

The LAFCO-approved annexation includes, on the ocean

side of the freeway, all the land between the Aptos fire district and the present La Selva fire district boundaries.

North of the freeway, the annexation proposal includes the Larkin Valley intersection owned by the state, the old NBC Ranch and several adjoining parcels for which the county has either proposed rural residential subdivisions, or is currently processing subdivision applications — about 24 homes, according to information provided LAFCO last Wednesday.

Forbes delivered a little lecture to commissioners before they voted.

"Can any of you in all good conscience deny fire protection to control growth in an area?" he asked.

"Aptos-La Selva has a 3½-minute response time to the

Larkin Valley intersection; the California Department of Forestry has a 12-minute response time. If your home was on fire or your child not breathing, which department would you prefer?" Forbes asked the commissioners.

"Response time in the case of a stoppage of breathing or severe bleeding is critical," Forbes added. "Three minutes by Aptos-La Selva is marginal. Twelve minutes by the CDF is fatal."

"San Andreas Road provides the main access to La Selva and a major portion of Seascap. San Andreas runs through the middle of the area not annexed under the alternate (Patton) proposal. It seems impractical for our fire apparatus and paramedic unit to respond to La Selva via a road outside the district."

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