

Aptos Chamber of Commerce puts a damper on dispute

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Discord within the Aptos Chamber of Commerce was quieted Thursday morning after directors met in a special session to discuss the controversy over remarks made last month by incoming President Glenn Specht before the Board of Supervisors.

During the chamber board's meeting on Nov. 13, Director Bob McKenzie accused Mrs. Specht of "belittling and degrading," the chamber during the supervisor's hearing on the Aptos Village Traffic Plan. He also argued with Mrs. Specht over whether the chamber's endorsement of the second traffic alternative had been a unanimous decision.

The new president was further criticized because she had failed to sign a letter notifying supervisors of the chamber's endorsement. Outgoing President Larry Wrathall had been unavailable to sign the letter requested by Director Sam Wright, and Mrs. Specht refused to sign it because she said such a letter was not authorized in the chamber's motion. Instead, she suggested Wright use the chamber's minutes.

There were a dozen directors present at Thursday's meeting to help iron out the chamber's differences, and the early discussion was an only slightly less emotional explanation of the previous debate.

McKenzie said he had been "offended, angered and dismayed," by the new president's remarks before the county board.

Brewster Burns, Chamber vice-president, asked McKenzie what specific action he wished to propose.

McKenzie said he wants a clear policy to be written regarding the communication of Chamber

endorsements to another body. He also said chamber members should make it clear when they speak in public whether or not they are representing the chamber or speaking as individuals.

Mrs. Specht told the group that she has always been careful to make that distinction. She also defended her reasons for refusing to write the letter which she said was not authorized, and once again claimed that the chamber's minutes had never reflected a unanimous vote.

Further arguments drew claims that directors were "beating a dead horse." Burns then delivered a lecture in which he told the group he felt the divisiveness of the last two meetings is "doing the chamber more harm than good."

Burns said he feels that two "relatively new," chamber directors have obvious criticisms.

"There is some new blood here, and this is good," he said, "But it must be good blood, and not bad blood that brings divisiveness."

Burns beseeched the directors to work together.

"Let's not have one side of the table against the other," he said, "Let us move forward together."

Burns added he had no wish to curtail the expressions of opinion by the new members, "But I have never seen a subject aired to this extent."

Both Wright and McKenzie said they were neither attempting to cause divisiveness nor trying to undermine the chamber president. McKenzie said he brought the issue up because

he believed it was important, and because he plans to volunteer his time for chamber work.

"I plan to give volunteer time and I don't want to see my work undone with comments like those made before the Board of Supervisors," he said.

Director Chuck Holcomb said he felt the discussion was a good one, and proved to be a lesson for the chamber.

"We will grow up a bit and learn to channel our actions properly," he said, "Now let's drop it."

The vice-president had moved to drop the issue, and Director Lucille Aldrich gave a second. There was a careful hand count to verify a unanimous vote.

Directors then appointed a committee to be led by McKenzie to revise the chamber's by-laws. This committee will review a suggested list of goals and objectives for the organization.

There was a consensus then, led once again by Burns, that there is a shift within the Aptos group from informality to a more formal approach to its meetings. Mrs. Specht agreed the chamber is undergoing a metamorphosis, toward a more formal stage.

In an earlier discussion, another issue raised by McKenzie was also resolved by a unanimous vote. This concerned the hiring of a representative to sell chamber memberships on a commission basis.

The chamber agreed to draw up and approve the contract for the sales representative for one year.