

LAFCO (Local agency formation commission)

Local-G Sets Straight Its Views On Live Oak Cityhood

By DON RIGHETTI
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Members of Live Oak Citizens Aligned for Local Government called Local G, think they have been getting the short end of the stick all around, and they are pretty sore about it.

In an interview they charged that they face a "stacked deck" in the membership of the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFC), have been given short shrift by supervisors, shunted out of the Live Oak incorporation spotlight by more publicity conscious organizations and confused in the mind of the public with those same organizations.

D. J. Mauro said, "We feel that most citizens don't know what Local-G is trying to do. We want to make it clear that we're independent and that we have the intention of incorporating Live Oak as a separate entity."

That's why members of Local-G split with their parent organization, the Live Oak Improvement Association, last October and formed their own group.

"We left because we felt that more and more the improvement association was devoting itself to the incorporation of the entire mid-county as a city, rather than Live Oak alone," Mauro said. He added the association accepted as virtually its official doctrine a UCSC study which recommends the incorporation of the entire mid-county.

But Local-G thinks the big incorporation scheme would be a poor deal for Live Oak.

Barbara White, an original member of the group, pointed out that 44 per cent of the population and 37½ per cent of the revenue for the big mid-county city would come from Live Oak. Yet, she noted, the UCSC study proposes only 28 per cent representation for the community on the mid-county city council.

"A mid-county city would be nothing but detrimental to Live Oak," she said.

After Local-G broke with the improvement association in October, it filed a Live Oak incorporation application with

LAFC on an area bounded by Soquel Drive, Capitola city limits, Santa Cruz city limits and Monterey Bay.

Basis of the application papers is a realistic budget estimate of the proposed city. Local-G members reported they spent countless hours in gathering the necessary data from the State Board of Equalization, local city and governmental agency officials and other professionals.

They formulated their budget and found they could operate their city without any additional property taxes, even though they didn't count on future sales tax revenues from the potentially rich 41st Avenue commercial complexes.

The potential of 41st Avenue for commercial development triggered most of the incorporation talk in the first place. Several large retail firms have indicated they may settle on the avenue and others already have done so.

Both Santa Cruz and Capitola looked hungrily at the sales tax revenue potential and both

made annexation overtures.

But Mrs. White charged that Santa Cruz was interested only in 41st Avenue and "didn't care anything about Live Oak." Of the two cities, Local-G would prefer annexation to Capitola, but Capitola wants to annex only as far to the north as Rodeo Gulch. That scheme would take in only about half of Live Oak and leave a narrow strip of unincorporated area between two cities, a situation Local-G finds "untenable."

But if the probes by Santa Cruz and Capitola spurred the incorporation activity in the first place, Local-G members now claim they have found an even more basic reason for cityhood. In their investigations to form a budget, members learned that the residents of Live Oak qualify for more than \$500,000 in state subventions and other revenues.

Now Local-G wants a Live Oak city to make sure the money is spent in Live Oak and to have a bigger say in how it is spent.

The group currently finds itself locked in a power struggle with other incorporation-active groups — the improvement association and the Committee for Mid-County Progress.

Local-G made several presentations of its program before Live Oak residents and members claim their ideas received "a tremendous response."

But it doesn't appear to fare so well before governmental bodies. The group claims it faces a "stacked deck" with LAFC since "all its members have a vested interest in Live Oak but those are not in the best interests of the community."

They said they had been promised \$500 by the county to print 5000 copies of their report in incorporation, but as last Tuesday's board of supervisors meeting, the request was delayed.

They claim that even the county insists on entangling them with other incorporation groups. As the supervisors considered the request for the \$500,

they noted another request by the committee for Mid-County Progress also was on the agenda, and considered them both at the same time, delaying both.

The committee is seeking \$1500 for professional help in preparing its application. Local-G noted pointedly that the county has already given UCSC \$1500 for the study on which the committee leans so heavily.

Mauro insists that all Local-G is trying to do is explain the situation to Live Oak residents and get the matter to a vote. "We don't want to force anything on anyone," he declared.

He couldn't say as much for the mid-county incorporation adherents. Noting seven communities have turned thumbs down on cityhood, he said the other groups were attempting to "force it on a number of areas that simply don't want it."

Mauro insists that Local-G remains in the forefront of the groups involved in the incorporation struggle. "We've been a step ahead of them all the way."