

Aptos: County's second biggest city?

By BILL AKERS

If Aptos were to become an incorporated city tomorrow, it would have a population of almost 30,000 — making it the second biggest city in the county — with a minimum yearly income of nearly \$2 million from various state tax sources.

Those were the implications of figures tossed out Monday night at a meeting called by the League of Women Voters to acquaint Aptos area residents with a study the group is conducting on governmental services and the question of incorporation.

About 35 people turned out at the Aptos High School cafeteria to hear Mrs. Glenn Specht and Mrs. Ree Burnat explain what the study is all about and discuss briefly some of the information already collected.

It would be another year, Mrs. Burnat explained, before another such meeting would be held, at which time the League of Women Voters may or may not endorse incorporation "or some alternative form of government."

In the meantime, the League's study committee — consisting of Mrs. Specht, its chairman, Mrs. Burnat and Mrs. Elizabeth Prince — will continue to collect data with the help of Cabrillo College and Aptos High School government students.

Mrs. Specht said that Cabrillo will include a questionnaire in one of its monthly blanket mailings, in which

residents will be asked their views on incorporation.

It will cost about \$200 to make the mailing, towards which the Aptos Chamber of Commerce — one of the sponsors of Monday night's meeting — has contributed \$25. The remainder will be made up by individual contributions, with Mrs. Specht saying she would personally underwrite the cost if it is not met by other contributions.

Don Schwerling, Aptos High Principal, said the school's government students, as class projects, will conduct random samplings in the area on the public attitude toward incorporation.

Monday's meeting was mostly an explanatory one, with Mrs. Specht and Mrs. Burnat explaining the League's role and the scope of the study.

The purpose of Monday's meeting, Mrs. Burnat said, "is to understand the governmental services (received) in the Aptos area, what they are and what they do. At subsequent meetings we will talk about alternative means of providing these services . . . we'll talk about all aspects of incorporation, for and against."

Mrs. Specht said the incorporation study area includes most of the 95003 postal delivery area. On the north it is bounded generally by a line running along Park Avenue and Porter Gulch up to Nisene Marks State Park, and on the south by La Selva Beach.

Within that area, she said, is a population of 29,691, which was obtained by multiplying the number of registered voters by three. The assessed valuation in the area is about \$97 million, not including Cabrillo College or public utilities.

Mrs. Specht gave a rundown of the urban services in the area and which agencies provide them. These include the Pajaro Valley School District (although a portion of the study area also lies within the Soquel Elementary School District and Santa Cruz High School District attendance areas); the Santa Cruz city-county library system; Santa Cruz Transit district; Soquel Creek and Central Santa Cruz water districts; Aptos, Soquel and California Division of Forestry (and a portion of the Capitola) fire districts, and the Santa Cruz County Sanitation District.

For law enforcement, it depends upon the Santa Cruz County sheriff's office. "The service you receive (from the sheriff's office) depends on how things are going in the county and who's on vacation that week," Mrs. Specht declared.

The incorporation study area lies in portion of four of the sheriff department's "beats," she explained, with each "beat" costing about \$150,000 a year to maintain.

Planning, zoning, parks and public works services are provided by the County of Santa Cruz, she said, with the area also lying within the

jurisdiction of the Regional Coastal Commission and the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AM-BAG).

Mrs. Specht then produced a list of revenues that might be expected if the study area were to become an incorporated city. The figures, she said, were "guesstimates" based on the best available information. Sales and use taxes would amount to about \$167,000 a year, based on 1976 data, and not including taxable sales in Redwood Village or Deer Park.

Other state subventions that might be expected, are: liquor license fees, \$6,600; cigarette taxes, \$69,300; in-lieu taxes, \$393,000; gas tax revenues, spendable only on roads, \$133,000; other gas tax funds, \$159,000 and another \$4,000 in other state allotments.

The figures do not take into consideration other federal and state grants available to cities on an application basis, she said.

"Aptos City" could expect \$297,700 in revenue sharing funds, she said, based on the experience of Watsonville, a city of somewhat smaller size (20,540). Other local taxes (not affected by Prop. 13) that might be collected in the study area include, room tax, \$47,000; franchise taxes, \$114,740; fines and forfeitures, \$92,000; and licenses and fees, \$256,000. The city would also be able to collect school and park dedication fees, she said.

Mrs. Specht's list of income estimates totalled a bit over

\$1.7 million for the study area.

During the question and answer period which followed the presentation, Mrs. Burnat emphasized that the League's study, one of several being conducted throughout the county on governmental services, "is not on incorporation. It is a study of governmental services and how they are applied in the Aptos area. Later we will discuss the alternatives." These alternatives, she said, could include incorporation, consolidation of existing districts, formation of other services districts or a municipal services commission operating under the board of supervisors.

Questioned about the Aptos Chamber of Commerce role in the talk of incorporation, Chamber president Mrs. Lucile Aldrich said, "Our interest is in studying the question. We have not taken a stand."

One of the incorporation "plums" would be the Porter-Sesnon property, across the freeway from Cabrillo College, for which the firm of Hare, Brewer and Kelley have obtained a 99-year development lease from the owners, the University of California. There has been talk of Capitola annexing the property. "The reason is that it is easier to get a development permit through in Capitola than in the county," Mrs. Specht said.

"Everybody is trying to get hold of Porter-Sesnon," retorted an audience member.