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MARILYN LIDDICOAT

"I would like to see less emphasis on environmental review."

Incorporation for Aptos not her cup of tea

By BOB SMITH

"I would not like to see Aptos incorporate," said Supervisor Marilyn Liddicoat last week. "I think it would be premature," she added, referring to the latest talk of attempts to gain cityhood for the midcounty community.

"Some areas incorporate for social reasons — they have a feeling of neighborliness or comradeship. That's not a reason. The area should incorporate for financial reasons if the cost of government is less and the service more efficient."

Noting that a city council would assume many of the burdens now shouldered by the area supervisor, she added, "It would be easier for me to have Aptos incorporated."

She'd been in office for just 10 days, but she has already lost one battle with her colleagues (over moving the courtrooms) and is looking to several others.

In an interview last week, Mrs. Liddicoat said she'd like to see the county planning commission expanded to nine members, giving greater community input; less emphasis on the environmental review process; a new look at the county jail location and size; and some new

thinking about the county's transportation system.

"I'm very impressed with Kay Bowden," she said, assessing the performance of the county planning director. "She is doing an excellent job. I think she understands her department's problems and the problems people have with her department.

"She is supposed to come up with a reorganization of the planning department, which she did in December, but it did not include a reduction in staff, so it was remanded to her to do it again.

"The supervisors cannot tell her to cut staff and then pass ordinances or policies that require additional staff supervision.

"Mrs. Bowden has made many recommendations to the board," Mrs. Liddicoat continued. "She wrote several letters to the previous board of supervisors, urging them not to enact the proposed grading ordinance that was propounded by the grading committee.

"She pointed out that to implement that ordinance would mean the addition of several people to the department at a time when the board of supervisors was talking about cutting staff.

"At last Tuesday's meeting she told the board," Mrs. Liddicoat continued, "that she did not feel that planned development (PD) zoning should be applied in rural areas because it would take much more staff time to supervise.

"Not only would staff time be costly, but when PD zoning is imposed, it means much more cost in construction to the homeowner in the way of architect fees and sometimes attorney fees to satisfy the esthetic taste of a planner.

"I would like to see a lot less emphasis on environmental review," Mrs. Liddicoat says. "I feel we are being unrealistic. Santa Cruz County is no one's personal Eden. We can't keep it environmentally pure and assure people of low-cost housing and an adequate place to work.

"We have to pay more attention to people than to salamanders."

Looking at the planning commission, she said, "I would like to see it expanded to nine members. There would be more community input and variety."

She isn't too hopeful about the county's future road budget. "I'm sure that Mr. Borovatz and Mr. Patton will continue in their plans, since part of the transportation plan is to discourage cars and favor public transportation."

She favors increased funding of the road maintenance and construction budget.

"One comment that Phil Baldwin made is that he was concerned about parking at the governmental center. Both of us had a devil of a time finding a

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Liddicoat

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parking space there this summer."

County government has allocated just three parking spaces for the five supervisors.

The new county jail is now targeted to take a large chunk out of the available parking at the governmental center. She'd like to see it moved across the street.

Businessmen and Santa Cruz civic leaders have privately told her that they don't like the idea of a jail at the entrance to the city.

"My own thought is that locating the jail in front of the courts building is like putting prisoners in a fishbowl.

"When they are in outdoor recreational activities, they are subject to the view of all passers-by. I'm hoping to convince the supervisors to relocate the jail across the street (in the present juror parking lot).

"I also hope to convince two other supervisors to accommodate the present average daily jail population. The thought behind the 92 prisoners (the present jail size projection) was that by doing so, the judges would be motivated to sentence less prisoners to jail and the sheriff's department to make less arrests.

"But the board of supervisors has no control over those two functions and should not have control," she feels.

"Further, we now have a small jail and we have an average daily population over 100, and sometimes as much as 130."

What about diversion programs for offenders? "I will support the diversion programs so the judges have an option, but I won't attempt to tell judges what to do. In some instances, the programs work and are less costly than a maximum security jail."

Mrs. Liddicoat believes her constituents will not accept any cuts in the sheriff's departmental budget.

"Again, as the Aptos Council of Improvement Associations has been saying, that is the one area of county government that they are not willing to cut the budget. People want to feel secure on the streets and in their homes.

"I don't feel the board (supervisors) should tolerate the undermining of the sheriff's department by a vocal minority who appear at meetings of the board of supervisors. There are many people in the county who can't get to the meetings who support the sheriff.

"I hope we don't have to hear about SWAT again."

What about the storm that has been reported to be settling around the shoulders of county public works director Don Porath. The only way she knew Porath's job might be in jeopardy is through the newspaper speculation, she said.

"He's a hard-working, practical guy. What's hypocritical about the thing is that people who don't like roads favor the coastal plan which says we must make the coast accessible to all people. If we are to have increased usage, we have to do some road maintenance. I can see some curtailment on new roads, but we must do some maintenance. The county is subject to liability on poorly-maintained roads."

She is also critical of the at-

acks that have recently been made on county assessor John Seidlinger and his office's assessment practices.

"I'm concerned that the person (Bob Colonna) who has been attacking him has run unsuccessfully for assessor in Santa Clara County. I must question his motives here. . .

"I've personally investigated his complaints and see nothing irregular about the assessments on the parcels in question. The tax assessor's practices are set by state law and he doesn't have that much discretionary leeway."

Governmental operations and tax reform continue to be among her top priorities. "Gov. Brown has requested counties to tell him what programs to stop mandating. My goal is to see counties do just that.

"A friend of mine is director of finance for Arkansas. They don't accept federal money for social programs. There are other states that don't have the expensive social programs we do. There is no reason to give welfare to able-bodied people who can find work if they look hard enough for it.

"I see an awful lot of waste in programs designed to help the poor, mothers who don't have a husband or the elderly. I see an awful lot of money supposed to help them that goes into the pockets of the people running the program — overhead, salaries.

"The word is that for every dollar of welfare, there are two dollars going into the pockets of the middle class who run the programs. The middle class has a vested interest and the money isn't going to the poor for whom the program is designed," she declared.