

Aptos Incorporation Wheels Still Turning

Jan. 18, 1969, was a memorable day as Aptos began spinning its wheels toward incorporation. Today, almost exactly 10 years later, those wheels are still spinning.

"It hasn't been a steady, grinding, moving forward to cityhood movement," understated Lucile Aldrich, Aptos' unofficial "mayor," who currently serves as president of the Aptos Chamber of Commerce. In a statement that dates back 10 years, she added, "The time has come for incorporation."

On paper, it appears Aldrich is right. Citing a League of Women Voters' study, Aldrich explained that if Aptos became an incorporated city tomorrow, it would be the second largest city, in terms of population, in the county. Its minimum yearly income would be around \$2 million.

Incorporation would include most of the 95003 postal delivery area. It would be bounded on the north by a line running along Park Avenue and Porter Gulch up to Nisene Marks State Park, and on the south by La Selva Beach.

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

"We would definitely have a surplus in the treasury," said Aldrich. "Right now we're robbing ourselves and aren't getting back the tax revenue we put in. Incorporation will make sure that these tax dollars are returned to us."

Aptos and Soquel fire departments and the California Department of Forestry would provide firefighting services, she

noted, and the Santa Cruz County sheriff's office would continue law enforcement. Other urban services for the new city would include the Soquel Creek and Central Santa Cruz water districts, Santa Cruz County Sanitation District, Pajaro Valley School District, Santa Cruz city-county library system and the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District.

Aldrich cited Hillsboro and Carmel as examples of small cities that incorporated. "They didn't grow into monsters because they were controlled by the people in the area. Many people will say they came to Aptos to get out into the country. Well, changes would only be made if the people want it."

Other benefits Aldrich sees to incorporation include alleviation of traffic snarls in Aptos Village and ownership rights to the lucrative 66-acre Porter-Sesnon property across the freeway, from Cabrillo College. The University of California, which owns the property, has leased it to developers who are talking about building a convention center and shopping complex on the site. Capitola hopes to annex the property since it lies near its border and development of it would mean additional sales tax revenue to that city.

For that reason, the Aptos Chamber of Commerce has endorsed the concept of incorporation. The Local Agency Formation Commission, which decides annexations, therefore will delay action concerning Capitola expansion until residents of Aptos make a decision on cityhood.

"The possible loss of this beautiful, open area, not to mention the loss of revenue, was the catalyst that speeded

incorporation talk up," admitted Aldrich. "America is a crisis country and it isn't until something happens that you get action and reaction."

The Aptos Village Urban Design Plan has been pending before the county Planning Commission since May, and with it, are the traffic problems in the village. Aldrich said, "Obviously the county isn't going to do anything about it. I have heard that it will be a minimum of six and more likely 10 years before anything is done. We will have the money to make improvements if the people want it."

The League of Women Voters, led by Mrs. Glenn Specht, Mrs. Ree Burnat and Mrs. Elizabeth Prince, have released a list of revenues totaling nearly \$936,000 that the city could anticipate upon incorporation. Some \$167,000 would be collected through sales and use taxes based on 1976 data and not including Redwood Village or Deer Park taxable sales. Federal and state grants, not to mention revenue sharing and other taxes could push that income to close to \$2 million.

Aldrich noted some people were saying she was pushing incorporation to give her more power. "I'm already the unofficial mayor of Aptos," she said. "I get letters addressed to the city of Aptos. If I was looking for power, I already have it. I just want to see Aptos preserved!"

That idea also dates back 10 years to the time three UCSC students - Mike Twombly, Judy Gaines and Mark Springer first did an incorporation study. The now-defunct Committee for Mid-County Progress voted on Jan. 19, 1969, to "unanimously favor the idea of incorporating Mid-County."

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