

They like the idea

Two Capitola councilmen back Aptos cityhood

By KATHARINE BALL
STAFF WRITER

Two Capitola councilmen said yesterday they'd like to see Aptos incorporated as a city.

Councilman Michael Routh and Mayor Jerry Clarke made their remarks at an annual City Day luncheon at Seafood Mama's, sponsored by the Capitola Chamber of Commerce.

Routh said an Aptos city council would probably be easier to work with than the county Board of Supervisors, which currently rules the area.

"(The supervisors) don't work as a team," Routh said. "They're each looking out for the self-interest of the area they represent."

Clarke said there would be no economic harm to Capitola if Aptos incorporates, because the two areas are not vying for the same revenues. He said Capitola's costs might even be cut if the prospective new city agreed to share a police department or other services with Capitola.

Council members Stephanie Harlan and Ron Graves did not

comment on incorporation. Bob Bucher was absent.

In another matter, Harlan said the council had acted in a "light-hearted moment" when it voted recently to send a letter to would-be Wingspread developer Ryland Kelley, offering to annex to Capitola the 66-acre Porter Sesnon site adjoining New Brighton State Beach.

The council was vocal in its opposition to the conference center-performing arts project throughout the proposed development's nine-year history. County voters rejected Wingspread by a nearly 2-1 margin last month.

Harlan said there was virtually no chance Capitola would annex the property, for two chief reasons. One is that Porter Sesnon is not included in Capitola's "sphere of influence," which outlines the future boundary lines to which the city may eventually expand.

The other is that Capitola probably could not afford to annex Porter Sesnon, if it had

any sales tax-producing venture on it. Capitola is nearing its Gann Spending Limit, a somewhat arbitrary cap created by Proposition 4 in 1979, and placed on all cities, districts, counties and the state to limit the amount of tax dollars each may collect and spend. Future development and sales-tax income increases on 41st Avenue will probably put Capitola up against its limit, Harlan said.

To spend all the money that comes in, the city may in the next few years have to ask voters for permission to override the Gann Limit, she said.

Harlan also said it was unlikely the city would annex much of the Live Oak area west of 41st Avenue, because it is expensive for cities to provide police, road maintenance and other services to residential areas, which no longer generate sufficient property tax to cover the cost of serving them.

Clarke added, "Why take in a depressed area the county has let go for years, and cost (the current residents of Capitola)

money to fix it up?"

Capitola's sphere of influence encompasses about half of Live Oak, up to Rodeo Gulch.

City officials also said there were no plans to put city money into erosion control on Grand Avenue, where buildings perched on the edge of the coastal cliff are beginning to fall off. A portion of cliff under the Crest Apartments gave way last fall, and there are other signs of serious erosion, said City Manager Steve Burrell.

"It would take \$1,000 to \$10,000 a foot to shore up the cliff," said Burrell. He said eventual collapse of the cliff was probably inevitable.

"We're talking about delaying tactics at best," he said. He said Grand Avenue residents had been offered the opportunity to form a special assessment district to raise the money to stabilize the cliff, but given a cost of about \$24,000 per house lot, they had declined.

"It would be costly for the rest of Capitola taxpayers to save it," Burrell said.