

Koester: City Not Out To Strangle Live Oak



Dave Koester

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Santa Cruz City Manager Dave Koester has denied allegations thrown out in many corners of the mid-county that his city is seeking to take over the Live Oak area by gaining control of its vital services, such as sewers and water.

The oft-repeated charge is that Santa Cruz is attempting to take over the services — it already has the water — and thus apply an economic stranglehold that would force Live Oak to annex to Santa Cruz.

Koester admitted freely that Santa Cruz would like to have the sales tax bonanza of the blossoming commercial section in Live Oak along 41st Avenue.

“Who wouldn’t?” he declared. To get it, Santa Cruz would

have to take all of Live Oak as well.

But the city manager steadfastly maintains Santa Cruz is not attempting to strangle Live Oak gradually into becoming part of the city.

“The people of the mid-county have misinterpreted our goals and overestimated our power,” he charged.

Koester said the city isn’t pressing its Live Oak annexation campaign at all right now, that it will wait until that area’s incorporation election is held before it decides whether to go ahead at all.

“A large part of our problem is a lack of understanding — of government and what the various governments in the county are trying to do,” he said.

He blamed news media for fanning the sparks of distrust. “The news media have a tendency to magnify differences,” he charged. “There always are some differences. Even the best behaved family has them.

“But you never hear about all the good things they do together.

“If you took all the population of the north county, it would only amount to a medium sized city — about 100,000,” Koester continued. “So the scope of our problems is greatly exaggerated, we’re just not that large. It seems to me that what we need, and the time is appropriate for it, is an era of massive cooperation in the north county.

“By and large, the people of the area — the average citizens

— are ready for it. I think what the average citizen is interested in is good service at the lowest possible cost. When they turn on the faucet in the morning they want the water to be there. When they get on the phone to call the fire or police departments, they want to know that those services are there. This is really what a lot of the discussion is about in the north county area.”

Koester admitted that Santa Cruz is not without guilt in fostering the current lack of cooperation. “We’ve all had our shortcomings in years past for varying reasons.”

He said part of the problem is a provincialism on the part of both elected and appointed officials. Officers often are over zealous in looking out for the

best interests of the area they represent and fail to pay attention to the overall good, he observed.

“But if all the officials were interested in cooperation and in capitalizing on all the good things we have, rather than trying to capitalize on the shortcomings, we’d be a lot better off.”

The city manager said it was in that spirit of cooperation that Santa Cruz had offered services to the surrounding area, rather than in an attempt to bring them under city control.

“The city council of Santa Cruz has extended offers of service in several areas in the best of faith and with unselfish motives,” he maintained.

He pointed out the council

has passed a resolution offering to treat the sewage of San Lorenzo Valley and Scotts Valley if those areas ask for the service.

On the basis of the resolution, he reminded, Scotts Valley called a bond election to pay for a municipal sewer collection system. The election failed, but the offer still goes, Koester said.

Santa Cruz has said — and still says — that if the East Cliff and Capitola sanitation districts want to use Santa Cruz’ sewage outfall line, the city will work out a cooperative agreement, Koester went on.

In fact, he said, Santa Cruz is holding up its own plans for an outfall until it sees what the mid-county wants to do.

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