

Warnings of Aptos city growth called 'scare tactics'

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Warnings that Aptos is headed for "dramatic change" in growth if it incorporates as a city were branded as "scare tactics" by the former leader of the incorporation effort.

Tom Carmody, who headed the Aptos Incorporation Study Group at one time, said he thought "nobody could manage growth in the Aptos area worse than the

county."

"We aim at keeping the ambience of Aptos the way it is," Carmody said. "The supervisors are afraid of losing Aptos as a cash cow. They don't want to see Aptos money spent in Aptos."

The remarks about runaway growth in Aptos came from Local Agency Formation Commission members Gary Patton and Robley Levy, who are also members of the Board of Supervisors.

The commission was told at its regular meeting yesterday by LAFCO Director Patrick McCormick that the proposed city's boundaries would include 660 acres outside the urban services line, and that the city's sphere of influence would take in 2,235 acres, almost four square miles, outside the urban services line.

Patton said those figures represent the "dramatic change" that can happen when a city is

incorporated.

The urban services line marks the division between dense urban residential growth and larger land parcels in rural areas. The sphere of influence of a city is the farthest reaches beyond the existing boundaries to which a city can reasonably grow.

Patton said that the area included in the sphere of influence proposed, almost four square miles, "speaks for itself" and

would be "incredibly growth-inducing."

Levy said that the area considered represents "two-thirds more than the county currently plans for urban development in Aptos."

Carmody said he has had to step aside in the fight for incorporation because he moving to Michigan to be the president of a company there. But he said he wasn't going to sell his Aptos

property, and hopes to "return to spend my declining year in the city of Aptos."

Carmody said that the comments by Patton and Levy were "scare tactics" and raise "spurious" issues.

"(Levy) wouldn't go to bat to stop Wingspread," he said. "Citizens groups had to do that. What the county has done is allow a hodgepodge of development with

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no architectural integrity."

Carmody said that the Aptos area is weary of seeing its tax dollars not come back to Aptos in the form of services, and that tax-dollar drain leaves it at a disadvantage when compared to the cities of Watsonville, Capitola and Santa Cruz, which get sales tax revenues.

Carmody said that much of the land included in the proposed city boundaries that fall outside the urban services line has already been developed, or consists of undevelopable ravines and buffer area.

"Our pitch all along has been one of slow growth," Carmody said. "The county plan is to pack Aptos with more development than anyone here would like."

Levy called Carmody's comments little more than "rhetorical posturing."

Levy said that since she has been on the board, "the level of growth in the Aptos area has been cut back by one-third, and I plan to continue in that fashion."

"The question is what kind of future will Aptos have," she said. "The county has tough standards for development in rural areas," and the policies of a new city government could be less stringent.

Levy pointed out that the areas targeted for cityhood that are outside the urban services line include a "big chunk" of the Seascape Uplands area.

Levy said the incorporation plans for development "go far beyond what the county is even willing to consider at this time."

LAFCO will consider the incorporation effort further when the backers of the proposal submit a final feasibility study, which is expected to be completed next month.