

Aptos cityhood backers just a few signatures short

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The Aptos Incorporation Group has 16 days to come up with 129 more valid signatures needed to continue the process of making Aptos a city.

Pat McCormick, executive director of the Local Agency Formation Commission, said he would send a letter tomorrow officially notifying the group of the number of signatures lacking on its incorporation petitions. A postmark on his letter starts a 15-day countdown to get the rest of the signatures. The County Elections Office will then have 10 days to check them, he said.

The deadline doesn't seem to worry members of the Aptos Incorporation Group, however. Glenn Specht, a member of the group, said the first 3,447 signatures were so easy to get, 129 more should be a cinch. Many people didn't sign the first round of petitions simply because they never got the chance, she said.

"There were dozens and dozens and dozens of streets not gone down," Specht said, "and hundreds of people who did not get the opportunity to sign."

The group actually got several hundred more signatures than the 3,075 needed, but the County Elections Office threw out 501 as invalid.

Most of them were thrown out because the signers were not among the 12,300 registered voters in the area, McCormick

said, but a few signed twice or listed a Post Office number rather than a street address, and some lived outside the incorporation area.

"One person lived on East Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz," he said.

The incorporation area is based on the county's Urban Services Line, Specht said.

Specht said members of the Aptos Incorporation Group will meet tonight to plot a strategy for getting the necessary signatures, perhaps going door-to-door or making an announcement and waiting for a response. The group will probably shoot for 200 to 300 more signatures than needed, she said.

Anyone else wanting to sign the petitions may call Buzz Haines at 688-2084 or Richard Allen at 688-7626.

A measure of the ease the group had in gathering the first round of signatures is that the petitions were turned in way ahead of deadline, Specht added; the group could legally have waited until next month.

McCormick confirmed that the group could have waited. The group's six-month deadline began when it got its first signature in early May, he said.

If the Aptos Incorporation Group gets the rest of the signatures it needs, the next step would be for it to complete a more detailed feasibility study of the proposed incorporation of Aptos, McCormick said. Members could either ask LAFCO

for guidance or just move forward on their own, he said, although he's had indications LAFCO's guidance would be sought.

The Aptos group is still aiming to get the incorporation issue on the November 1989 ballot, McCormick added.

The group chose to complete a two-part feasibility study, McCormick said, with the first phase aimed at determining whether it was worth doing a petition drive. The second phase will have to be more detailed to meet LAFCO requirements, he said.

McCormick said he would also want a better explanation of the fiscal impacts of an Aptos incorporation on other agencies, such as the County Service Areas for roads and parks and the flood-control district.

Once the study is handed in, McCormick said he would start the process of sorting through it. He'll be checking to see whether Aptos could support itself without raising anybody's property taxes, which is prohibited by Prop. 13 unless there's a two-thirds vote of the people.

"It's a real important point to incorporation," McCormick said, "because the first question a skeptic of the incorporation has is, 'Does this mean our property taxes are going to go up?'"

The bottom line, he said, is that the county can influence how much money would go to a city of Aptos.