

# Fire districts on brink of merger agreement

By BOB SMITH

A joint powers agreement between the Aptos and La Selva fire districts could be signed in the next three weeks.

The 10 directors representing both fire districts met last night to hammer out the major points of an agreement that may eventually result in a consolidation between the two agencies.

A working committee of La Selva directors Joanne Dlott and Roy Johnston and Aptos board chairman Richard Duchscher and director Stewart Davis will meet next Tuesday evening to review a contract that is being modeled on a 1981 agreement between the old Soquel and Live Oak fire districts. That agreement set up a joint powers agency (JPA) that eventually became the Central County Fire District.

If the committee approves the agreement, it will be presented to the Aptos fire board at its March 12 meeting and to the La Selva board on March 19.

The two boards met for slightly more than an hour last night and there were no major disagreements.

Duchscher seemed to set the tone at the beginning of the meeting.

"If we go ahead with the JPA, we will probably consider consolidation within two years. We have to look forward to a merger so we want to make sure we are putting this together properly so we can consummate the consolidation."

La Selva fire chief Al Kinslow added: "I feel that the study (made by Kinslow and Aptos Fire Chief Al Forbes) should be the background for a JPA and for consolidation in one or two years."

And when Davis asked the group, "Does anyone have any problems with an ultimate consolidation?" the only response came from La Selva director Bill Cameron.

"No problems," he said.

If the agreement is consummated, La Selva will have its fire station manned on a 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week basis by a captain and one, maybe two, firefighters. A paramedic emergency medical service, dispatched from Aptos' Rio del Mar fire station,

will be available to the community.

The directors agreed on the following points, should the agreement be signed:

## Name

The new department would be called the Aptos-La Selva Fire Department.

## Directors

The JPA governing board would be made up of five unpaid board members, three from the present Aptos fire board and two from the La Selva Board.

The suggestion for the 3-2 split came from La Selva director Don Green. Aptos directors said they wanted to pursue the idea of, when the two districts are consolidated, having two of the five board

members elected by residents in the old La Selva fire district, and the remaining three from Aptos. This, they argued, would guarantee the small community of La Selva a permanent voice in the fire district which might otherwise be dominated by Aptos.

## Employees

Full-time employees of the two fire districts would become employees of the joint powers agency with the right to be reemployed by the two districts if the JPA falls apart for some reason and consolidation does not take place.

Seven new firefighters would be hired under the plan submitted by Forbes and Kinslow. They would probably lose their jobs if the consolidation did not

take place, directors indicated. Five of those firefighters would probably be certified paramedics, which would fill the slots of those Aptos paramedics who want to return to being simple firemen and would also allow for vacation and sick-leave coverage for the present paramedics.

The remaining two new positions might be filled by new firefighters. La Selva directors wanted to know if the department would consider hiring some of the present La Selva volunteer firemen who, under a La Selva board policy, would be in line for any permanent openings in the La Selva fire departments. Forbes said he had no objections to considering them when he knew how many non-paramedic firefighters would be hired.

## La Selva volunteers

La Selva's surf rescue team would remain an active component of the merged fire department. But there was some disagreement between the two chiefs on the remainder of La Selva's volunteer firefighters. Kinslow seemed to say at one point in the discussion that there would still be volunteer firefighters in the La Selva area. "Under this arrangement, they would not respond to anything but structures (fires) or major incidents," Kinslow said. But Forbes made it very clear to the La Selva board members that he wants nothing to do with volunteer firefighters.