

Expert says Aptos can afford cityhood

By BOB SMITH
STAFF WRITER

A consultant believes that cityhood for Aptos is a financially viable option.

In a feasibility study released Sunday afternoon by the Aptos Incorporation Group, consultant William R. Zion contends that a Town of Aptos could not only pay its bills but, over a 10-year period, build a healthy \$15 million reserve fund without levying any new taxes or raising existing levies or fees.

The incorporation feasibility study was a requirement imposed by the Santa Cruz County Local Agency Formation Commission as a prelude to considering the group's application to incorporate the area.

LAFCO Executive Director Pat McCormick said this morning that the study would be presented to commissioners at their Nov. 1 meeting. But he said there is no date set yet for a public hearing on the incorporation study.

Among other issues, opponents

have questioned whether Aptos would be able to generate enough tax dollars through property and sales tax collections, as well as the other revenue it receives locally and from state agencies.

"Accumulated annual revenues indicate that the future of Aptos' financial viability as a town would not be in doubt," Zion concluded.

Part of the city's healthy financial condition would come from eight years of extra state revenues. State law now requires the state to assume that a new city has a total population of three times its registered voters for the first eight years of existence.

Zion projects the new city offering only a limited list of city-type services — services now being provided by the county. Those include: police protection, roads, parks and recreation, engineering review, street lighting, and capital improvements.

Services like libraries, fire protection, sanitation (sewage), water and schools would not be affected by the new city. They are now furnished by separate independent districts.

In reaching his conclusions, Zion said he relied on feelings from Aptos Incorporation Group members that county road maintenance and Sheriff's patrol services in Aptos are inadequate. The incorporation study budget for a doubling of road services and

costs, and an increase in Sheriff's services from less than one 24-hour beat to two patrol beats around the clock and two traffic officers. (A beat is one patrol car patrolling an area 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Sheriff's department normally runs seven beats in Santa Cruz County, with one car assigned to the Aptos area.)

There are 65 miles of county-maintained roads in Aptos which would become the town's responsibility. Zion said the present maintenance costs are estimated

Aptos cityhood at a glance

Revenues	First full year 1991-92 (\$1,000s)	10th year 2000-01 (\$1,000s)
Property tax	\$1,209	\$2,417
Sales tax	\$940	\$2,402
Lodging tax	594	\$2,158
State subventions	1,091	1,815
Planning fees	468	378
Other	1,232	2,367
TOTAL	\$5,534	\$11,177
Expenses		
General Administration	\$592	\$959
Police/traffic	1,879	3,042
Street/Public Works	980	1,374
Planning	648	1,049
Capital improvement	522	845
Other	549	727
TOTAL	\$5,170	\$7,996
Reserves		
Annual	\$364	\$3,181
Accumulated carryover	561	16,053
Subvention Add-on		
Annual	\$1,162	---
Cumulative	1,734	\$15,459
Population	19,669	22,489

at \$6,300 a mile, or \$409,500 annually.

Zion recommends more than doubling the annual expenditure, initially, spending \$980,000 in the first year on streets and public works and, by the budget year 2000-2001, raising that budget to \$1,374,000.

Not included in the road budget are the little county service areas set by property owners and the county to maintain private roads in the Aptos area. The county service areas would be abolished as part of the incorporation process, but the funds accumulating for work in those areas would still have to be spent on those roads by the city.

The town could set up its own "maintenance districts" to continue the private road maintenance, Zion said.

There are a myriad of county service areas in Aptos. Some are small road maintenance districts. Others, like CSA 38 and CSA 11, spread across the entire incorporated area of the county and pay for Sheriff's patrol services and county parks, respectively.

Police protection would be taken over by the new town, with a possibility of the Sheriff's department receiving a contract to provide law enforcement services — at a higher level than it now does — in Aptos.

So far as parks are concerned, Zion suggests that the Town of Aptos take over control or and responsibility for the existing Aptos Village Park and the proposed Seascape Resort Park. But the the county would continue to develop and operate the regional park envisioned for the Polo Grounds.

REFERENCE