

Aptos incorporation supporters confident

By JAMIE MARKS

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APTOS — The Aptos Chamber of Commerce has shouldered some of the blame — rightly or wrongly — for the failure of previous efforts to incorporate Aptos into a city, so it was with a degree of caution that the chamber heard Ken Fleissner discuss the subject Thursday morning.

But this time the incorporation talk has been generated by improvement groups and community organizations — a distinction that Fleissner and others believe lends more support to the idea.

"I think it's different now, and I think we're having some success," Fleissner said. "In the past the chamber was very involved in incorporation, but the support is more broad-based now and continuing to grow."

Or, as Vince Casey, president of the Rio del Mar Improvement Association said, the past efforts have been characterized as being "too business-oriented and growth-oriented. ... This time we have broad-based, community, grass-roots support for incorporation."

To date, the organizers have raised \$3,100 in dona-

tions of less than \$100 each for a feasibility study. Fleissner said it will cost between \$4,000 and \$6,000 for the first phase of the two-pronged study, and he hopes to have the money collected for phase one by next month.

If the ballpark figures generated by the first phase show that revenues for the city of Aptos will be at least 15 percent more than the expenses, then organizers will continue with a second, more detailed study, costing from \$6,000 to \$8,000 more.

The second aspect of the project will include a legal document drawn up for approval by the Local Agency Formation Commission, a history of Aptos, a definition of boundaries, an assessment of the revenues and expenditures for the proposed city, and an analysis of the effects on neighboring cities and the county.

Fleissner said preliminary reports indicate the proposed city will need \$4 million in revenue to support law enforcement, building inspectors, planners and a city government.

As it's conceived now, the city's boundaries would take in the controversial Wingspread hotel/conference/and performing arts center, as well as another major hotel development proposed for the Seascape benchlands, according to Fleissner.

The boundaries would also take in Rio del Mar and the area of Aptos that is in the urban services line up to the foothills.

The organizers are aware that the county is counting on revenues from the proposed Wingspread Beach

development, so income projections for the proposed city are being calculated with and without Wingspread and the Seascape benchlands proposal, he said.

Which raises the question Fleissner hears most often. Is the city able to support itself without a large commercial base (like in Scotts Valley and Capitola) and without an industrial sector (like in Santa Cruz and Watsonville)?

Fleissner said the example of Orinda, in Contra Costa County, has encouraged the Aptos organizers. Orinda is a small residential community which successfully incorporated recently. The tax revenues worked in Orinda, Fleissner said. Cities receive more state revenues than do counties, Fleissner pointed out, so a city of Aptos would be able to tap into so-called state subventions that are currently withheld. It would mean more money for road improvements.

The application for incorporation must be approved by LAFCO and be accompanied by a petition with the names of 25 percent of the residents of the proposed boundaries.

"LAFCO can completely put to rest any application for two years, so you do need broad-based public support," stressed Fleissner.

If LAFCO approves the plan, the Board of Supervisors must set an election, unless 51 percent of the people oppose it.

"Why incorporate?" asked Fleissner. "There's only one answer, that the people want local self-determination. They want to be in control of their destiny."