

Seacliff poll criticized

By BILL AKERS

A straw ballot in which members of the Seacliff Improvement Association indicated strong opposition to the incorporation of Aptos was based on misinformation, incorporation proponents feel, saying the record should be set straight and another poll taken.

Arguments against incorporation included in the mail ballot "were incorrect or misleading," according to Mrs. Glenn Specht, chairman of the Aptos Chamber of Commerce incorporation committee, and "those results should be invalidated and the survey done over."

At a meeting of her committee Thursday morning, Mrs. Specht said she did not think it was a case of intentional misrepresentation. "I think the Association (members) accepted the figures presented them by whoever put them together as correct, and would be embarrassed to find that they are not."

The figures Mrs. Specht was challenging were included in the pro-con arguments on incorporation included in a mail ballot sent out by the Seacliff Improvement Association to its members and to non-member community residents.

Association President Mervin Garibotto said that 375 ballots were mailed out to area residents and property

owners. Of those, 240 were sent to association members and the others distributed randomly to area residents. Of the 146 responses to the survey, 103 said they were opposed to incorporation, 15 were for it and 28 were undecided.

Mrs. Specht's fellow committee members approved a letter she drafted to send to the Seacliff group, in which she said, "While we would like

to applaud your intent in presenting pros and cons of incorporation . . . we think you will agree with us . . . there is a responsibility to see that facts presented are accurate."

Saying that while the committee disagreed with the conclusions of some of the arguments, they were valid arguments. "However, the remaining statements are factually inaccurate and/or misleading.

"We know this was not done intentionally, but since you have published a survey taken on the basis of this misinformation, we feel it will be necessary to respond publicly."

Included with the letter were the committee's rebuttal of arguments against incorporation included in the Seacliff straw poll.

Mrs. Specht refuted the Seacliff argument that no property tax would be available to the new city by saying that a state law signed in July makes property tax and state-bailout money available to new cities. The responsibility for determining how much of that money the new city would get lies with the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), she said.

The Seacliff ballot argued that the "guestimate" of \$560,000 in "other revenues" was "highly suspect" because it was based on figures taken from the cities of Watsonville and Santa Cruz "which are far

more highly industrialized and urbanized than Aptos."

Mrs. Specht responded: "It seems most valid to take the mean between Watsonville with less population but no growth control and Santa Cruz with more population but stronger growth control as the estimate for the Aptos community."

On the political side, Seacliff argued: "Aptos City would contain much the same political spread from socialist-liberals to conservatives as is experienced in the county. Incorporation would not mean the end to hasselling and strife, it would only bring it closer to home."

Mrs. Specht wrote in reply: "The whole idea of incorporation is to bring the responsibility for decisions back into the community they affect. We consider this one a pro, not a con."

Mrs. Specht also rebutted the Seacliff challenge to other figures in the anticipated budget of the proposed city and said that budget estimates and income figures will be changed to reflect 1979-80 city budgets. "Our only responsibility is to prove there is sufficient income to provide the present level of services," she said Thursday morning.

Chamber president and incorporation committee member Larry Wrathall said it was the committee's purpose in answering the Seacliff arguments "to point out our differences in an atmosphere of friendly procedure."

It was recently reported that the committee will not try to meet the March deadline for submitting the incorporation petitions to LAFCO in order to make the June 1980 ballot. Were that done, the city could become incorporated — if the voters approve — on July 1, 1980. Instead, Mrs. Specht said they will submit the petitions in December, hoping to make the November, 1980 ballot, with July 1, 1981, as the incorporation date. The reasons for the

delay were the slow rate at which the petitions are coming in with signatures, and the back-log of work before LAF-CO that could delay the public hearings on the incorporation past the deadline for the June 1980 ballot.

"I do not look at this as a setback," Wrathall said. "This is not a crisis incorporation. It's a looking-at to see if incorporation is a wise step. We are not anxious to go ahead until the people understand the issues. The extra time is an opportunity for the people to debate and think it through. If rational thought prevails, we will incorporate."

Wrathall also said that holding the incorporation election at the November 1980 general election would bring out more voters and "give a better idea of how people feel."

One thing not brought up at Thursday's meeting, but certainly an important factor in the Aptos incorporation picture, is the fate of the Porter-Sesnon property across the freeway from Cabrillo College.

Capitola city officials have already taken the first step toward annexing it into their city by approving an environmental impact report on the extension of the city's sphere of influence — a necessary step toward annexing the property.

Incorporation proponents in Aptos have also included the property within the boundaries of their proposed city.

And the Aptos incorporation proponents have long argued that Porter-Sesnon rightly belongs in Aptos and that incorporation was the one way to determine how the property will be developed.

Wrathall said Thursday that Capitola's move toward annexing might be the "crisis" that would stimulate support for Aptos incorporation. Mrs. Specht said that she did not believe LAFCO — which must make the decision about extending Capitola's sphere of influence. — would automatically give Porter-Sesnon to Capitola, but if it did, it would be a serious loss to Aptos but not fatal to the incorporation effort.

On the matter of how many people have signed the incorporation petitions, Mrs. Specht says she has a firm 500 signatures in hand, but there are a total of 175 petitions out — each with spaces for 20 signers — and there is no way to tell at this time just how many people have signed.

She said the petition circulators will be asked to report on how many names they have gathered for the committee's Nov. 15 meeting. She said it would take about 3,000 signatures to make sure there were enough to qualify the matter for LAFCO hearings.