

# Water's the obstruction to development of Pajaro

• By NANCY BARR

The future of Pajaro hinges on the area's water supply, some 50 residents were told at a public meeting Monday night.

The meeting at Pajaro School was organized by the Pajaro Community Services District and included a lineup of state and local officials who discussed improvements proposed for Pajaro.

Dorothy Steele, president of the community services district, along with the district's engineer, Charles Wagner, and an official of the county's inter-governmental affairs office, outlined plans to purchase and improve the Pajaro water system, which is now owned by the city of Watsonville. Funding for the \$2 million project is expected to come from three state or federal agencies.

The Pajaro water system is antiquated and provides an insufficient water flow for fighting fires, particularly in the industrial section of Pajaro, Ms. Steele said.

"We have fire hydrants not hooked up to water," she said. "We are in a severe fire hazard area."

Lt. Gary Barlow of the North County Fire Department, which provides fire protection to Pajaro, said, "for the most part, I've had to stop construction in Pajaro because of lack of fire protection because of water."

Once there is an adequate water system, the community can pursue the development of housing and industry, the officials said.

Assemblyman Sam Farr, D-Carmel, was the most optimistic of the speakers. He told the residents of Pajaro present in the audience they should be pleased with what local residents have done toward making improvements. He commended the community services district for drafting plans for a new water system and pursuing

funding for the project.

"You're a diamond in the rough," Farr said. "Here is this little pocket, that, but for water could be the most attractive area for growth and development."

"You're very much in a positive position," he said.

Supervisor Marc Del Piero praised Pajaro for pursuing the highest priorities first, namely an improved water system and economic development.

Some of the people in the audience, not satisfied with just listening, took the opportunity to tell the officials about the problems the community of Pajaro faces.

Bill Shott, a Pajaro resident for 30 years and owner of 60 housing units in Pajaro, said fire protection in the area is not as good as it once was, and cautioned the officials about inviting industries to locate there that may not be compatible with existing residential neighborhoods. Shott also suggested the community services district fix some of the streets, before putting any money into improvements planned for a

small park the district recently acquired.

Shott also suggested the district work toward an agreement with the city of Watsonville for providing water, and to improve relations between the two governmental bodies.

Alex Solano, a resident of neighboring Elkhorn, said he was concerned the bars and "houses of pleasure" in Watsonville would move over the bridge into Pajaro as a result of downtown redevelopment. He asked the local officials to be sure such establishments do not move into Pajaro.

At the end of the meeting, one person in the audience, Celia Organista, asked Assemblyman Farr whether, after hearing about all the problems in Pajaro, he would like to live in "this diamond in the rough."

Farr assured Mrs. Organista he would, saying he lived in worse conditions when he was in the Peace Corps and came to like the community he lived in.

"If you're an optimist," Farr said, "I think this is a very exciting opportunity for the Central Coast."

REFERENCE