Aptos city backers turn in application

By JENNIFER KOSS
STAFF WRITER

Aptos has taken another step toward cityhood with this week's filing of an application with the Santa Cruz County agency that oversees incorporations.

Pat McCormick, executive officer of the Local Agency Formation Commission, said he now has 30 days to review the application, tell the Aptos Incorporation Group what, if any, information must yet be submitted, and notify every public agency that serves Aptos of its incorporation plans.

McCormick said he would also notify the County Administrative Office, so figures on how much money the county collects from the Aptos area could be compiled for the Aptos Incorporation Group.

Santa Cruz attorney Kelly Walker, spokesman for the Aptos Incorporation Group, said work is continuing on a financial feasibility study of Aptos 10 years into the future. Preliminary budget figures are painting a rosier picture than first projected, he said.

Figures now indicate a city of Aptos would have close to $2 million in reserves annually, rather than the $1 million reserve discussed earlier, Walker said.

That figure includes state "subvention funds," which give new cities triple the amount of money cities that size would normally get from the state. The triple revenues would continue for eight years, Walker said.

McCormick compared that triple funding to a dowry parents might give a child getting married.

"I think it's just to help out," he said, "to get new cities started."

The money actually comes from a pool of money that the state distributes, based on population, to the 450 cities in the state, McCormick said.

According to preliminary figures, a city of Aptos would spend $3.6 million in its first year of operation, Walker said. The money would pay for services such as police protection and roads maintenance.

Santa Cruz County Sheriff Al Noren has given the Aptos Incorporation Group a preliminary estimate of how much police protection Aptos dollars could buy, Walker said. The county now spends $600,000 a year for deputies to patrol the Aptos area, but incorporation backers want to double that expenditure to $1.2 million. Doubling the expenditure, Walker said, would nearly triple the protection, according to Noren's estimates.

If the voters approved the incorporation of Aptos, the new city would put the issue of police protection out to bid and would consider proposals from the Capitola and Watsonville police departments as well as the Sheriff's Office, Walker said.

The Aptos feasibility study should be completed in a month, he said. The Aptos Incorporation Group is also drawing up a list of supporters, Walker said, which it will submit to LAFCO.

Incorporation advocates are not required by law to disclose contributors to the effort, but the Aptos Incorporation Group wants to assure LAFCO no big developers are behind the incorporation scheme.

County Supervisor and LAFCO member Gary Patton raised concerns at a meeting earlier this month that the incorporation drive might "be backed by people interested in commercializing and industrializing areas that are now largely rural, residential areas."

Walker said, "We feel that we have a very broad base as far as our supporters. And we don't really have any major contributors, and we want to point that out."

How long the incorporation issue takes to reach the ballot depends on LAFCO and the Board of Supervisors, but Walker said backers are hoping it will go to the voters in June 1990.

If the voters approved it, the new city of Aptos would have to get busy and hold a City Council election, because existing laws would only remain in effect for four months.

McCormick said another option would be to hold council elections in conjunction with the election on the incorporation issue. In fact, that's what cities that have incorporated recently in California have done, he said.

"One of the arguments for holding simultaneous elections," McCormick said, "is that the quality of the candidates could actually affect people's decision of whether to incorporate or not."