

Fire and Fire  
Protection to 1999

# Fire district merger in jeopardy

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## Meeting sought with LAFCO directors

Aptos fire district directors are seeking a meeting with County Supervisors Gary Patton and Robley Levy to discuss the future of the Aptos-La Selva Fire Department joint powers agreement.

The Aptos fire board held a special meeting last night primarily to discuss the Santa Cruz County Local Agency Formation Commission's (LAFCO) refusal to approve a proposed annexation by the La Selva Fire District of several hundred acres of agricultural land between the two districts, and also to annex the sites of several approved and pending residential subdivisions on and around the NBC Ranch north of Highway 1, and west of Larkin Valley Road.

Levy and Patton are the county representatives on the five-member LAFCO board.

La Selva fire board chairman Frances "Burly" Burlison said last night that he planned to call a special meeting of the La Selva directors for 7 p.m. next Tuesday to discuss that district's response to the LAFCO refusal.

Burlison and La Selva director Joann Dlott attended the Aptos meeting.

Aptos fire directors made it clear that they felt LAFCO had jeopardized the pending consolidation of the Aptos and La

Selva fire districts.

"If this (Patton's plan) goes through," Aptos board chairman Richard Duchscher said, "then the JPA and the consolidation goes down the tubes."

"This is a real sticky problem that could blow us out of the water," Duchscher said.

Aptos board members also said they could not understand the rationale behind the LAFCO decision which, if it becomes final next month, would create an "island" between the Aptos and La Selva fire districts — something they thought was contrary to LAFCO policy.

The fire directors unanimously voted to ask Levy and Patton to meet with fire district representatives in a last-ditch attempt to persuade them to support the original annexation proposals and, indirectly, the planned consolidation of the two fire districts.

La Selva has filed an application with LAFCO to annex the agricultural land on the ocean side of Highway 1 along San Andreas Road as a way of making the boundary between the two districts contiguous. The application also included the annexation of the NBC Ranch and adjacent property on the inland side of Highway 1, where several subdivisions are either approved or pending

before the County Planning Commission.

Aptos had originally been asked by LAFCO Executive Officer Pat McCormick to consider annexing the NBC Ranch at the same time as La Selva was planning to annex the northern part of the Larkin Valley. McCormick told the fire district at that time that

Levy backed a Patton proposal at the LAFCO meeting last Wednesday, directing La Selva to annex a strip of land along Highway 1 connecting the two districts, and providing a tenuous but legal connection between the two districts, making a future consolidation possible.

The move would leave the

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Richard Duchscher, Aptos board chairman

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the La Selva annexation would create an "island" unacceptable to LAFCO.

When the JPA and possible consolidation was proposed, the Aptos directors suggested that La Selva take over the annexation since La Selva is able to charge up to \$60 per residence and that would equalize the tax support paid to the fire districts. Aptos residents now pay a greater percentage of their property taxes for fire service than do La Selva residents without the annual service charge approved by La Selva voters.

NBC Ranch area outside the fire district and create an island of the coastal farm land owned by the Xanthus family south of San Andreas Road.

Aptos-La Selva Fire Chief Al Forbes told the Aptos directors last night that Levy explained her vote to him after the meeting by saying she didn't want to approve an annexation that would put agricultural land into the county's urban services area.

"She seemed completely unaware that the urban services line does not follow the fire

district boundaries," Forbes said.

(The Midcounty urban services line, as a practical matter, is determined by the availability of sewer service.)

"Mr. Patton," Forbes continued, "is proposing we (La Selva) annex a strip that is only the freeway. Doing this would create an island."

"I'm thoroughly mystified," the fire chief added. "I was under the impression that LAFCO was formed to prevent strip annexations and islands."

Aptos fire director Walt Jordan said, "Gary Patton is not particularly interested in agriculture. He's just using it to stop growth."

Other directors argued that inclusion of the land in a fire district isn't going to prompt development. "Even farmers need fire protection," director Stewart Davis said.

"What about someone who falls off the coastal bluffs, the injured farm worker or the pesticide fire?" Forbes wondered.

"Patton doesn't think it makes any difference whether this land is in the fire district or not, we will still send our fire engines there."

"That's not true," he said. "We have no automatic aid agreement with the California

Department of Forestry (which has a county contract to structure fires in the area outside the two fire districts). We have only a working agreement with (CDF Fire Chief) Dave Mack to send an engine on a confirmed structure fire.)"

"We are being penalized for being good neighbors," Forbes added.

Duchscher said he felt it would be possible for the fire district to stop its automatic response to CDF-responsibility fires around the district and abide by the terms of the formal mutual aid pact — which calls for the state fire department to have an engine company at the fire before it can request mutual aid from neighboring fire departments.

In other action, the board: —Approved the purchase of \$8,200 sedan from National Car Rental for Forbes.

—Awarded a \$59,245 contract to Garden State International for a truck chassis that will be used for a new fire water tanker. The board rejected a lower bid from an Oakland firm because their bid did not meet the district's specifications.

—Heard a presentation from Architect Richard Hyuck on a three-story, \$244,000 addition to the main fire station. The addition will become the living quarters for firemen assigned to the headquarters' station on Soquel Drive.

REFERENCE

WATSONVILLE  
REGISTER-PAJARONIAN  
August 14, 1985