

East Palo Alto's journey toward cityhood

February 1931: The East Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce proposes incorporating the community as a means of keeping it out of a proposed San Francisco-San Mateo County merger being discussed at the time. The idea later is dropped, along with county merger plan.

March-November 1951: The East Palo Alto Lions Club revives the idea of incorporation. A group called the Ravenswood-Willow Boosters conducts a fiscal study, but it votes 38-29 against the idea of incorporation amid charges the meeting was packed with anti-city members.

September 1953-February 1954: East Palo Alto civic leaders form a committee to study incorporation, but the effort dies following a meeting at Brentwood School that results in a near riot involving a largely anti-city crowd of 400 people.

May-August 1958: East Palo Alto residents living west of the Bayshore Freeway attempt to incorporate the area into a city to be called Woodland Oaks. At the same time, an effort is made to incorporate area east of the Bayshore into a different

city. Both drives fail.

April 1981: After years of discussion, pro-city supporters file papers and seek a November 1981 incorporation election. The San Mateo County Local Agency Formation Commission, which must permit an election, rejects the idea, saying it is too soon for a public vote because fiscal studies are incomplete.

September 1981: LAFCO concludes that East Palo Alto should be studied further and rejects a proposed April 1982 election. Five days later, the panel decides to reconsider the vote.

October-November 1981: LAFCO reverses itself and clears the way for an April 1982 election. The county Board of Supervisors later places four measures on the ballot permitting incorporation.

April 13, 1982: Incorporation is defeated at the polls when one of four necessary ballot measures fails by 41 votes. Figures show the proposal to dissolve the East Palo Alto Sanitary District was defeated by district voters who live in Menlo Park and other areas

that would not have been part of the new city.

January-April 1983: LAFCO and the county supervisors vote to place a single incorporation measure on the June 1983 election ballot. Anti-city leaders fail in their legal efforts to halt the voting.

June 7, 1983: Incorporation passes by a 15-vote margin. The final tally is 1,782 yes votes; 1,767 no votes.

July 1, 1983: East Palo Alto officially becomes a city.

September 14, 1983: Judge John Cruikshank, a visiting judge from San Joaquin County, rejects arguments by anti-city leaders that up to 300 absentee ballots were cast illegally. He tosses out only eight votes — five for incorporation, three against.

December 1983: Attorney Paul N. McCloskey Jr. appeals Cruikshank's decision to the state Court of Appeal.

Wednesday: State Court of Appeal in San Francisco votes 2-1 to toss out 106 absentee ballots. East Palo Alto and San Mateo County officials vow to appeal decision to the California Supreme Court.