

Local News

The Peninsula Times Tribune



Friday
Sept. 18, 1981

Action Line.....	B-5
Business.....	B-9
Comment.....	B-6
Obituaries.....	B-8
Police blotter.....	B-8

E. Palo Alto leaders shocked, disappointed

By Phyllis Brown
and Steve Taylor
Times Tribune staff

EAST PALO ALTO — The decision Wednesday to place the area of East Palo Alto west of the Bayshore Freeway in Menlo Park's "sphere of influence," and the remainder of the community in a "holding sphere," was devastating for many proponents of incorporation.

East Palo Alto Vice Mayor Berkley Driessel expressed the sentiments of many incorporation backers Thursday when he said the decision, made Wednesday by the San Mateo County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), brought him to

But they say LAFCO hasn't killed the drive for cityhood

"And a white German male doesn't cry very easily," he said.

Driessel represents the Municipal Council district west of the Bayshore and would lose his council seat if the area is annexed to Menlo Park (he would thus become a resident of Menlo Park).

Many who have worked for incorporation were similarly affected.

"I am so full, I can't talk about it," said Carmaleit Oakes, a leader of the East Palo Alto Citizens Committee for Incorporation (EPACCI).

Members of the Menlo Park City Council also were

surprised and disappointed by the decision, they said.

"I am shocked. I just think that is so wrong... they are leaving East Palo Alto (east of the Bayshore Freeway) a crumbling ruin," Menlo Park councilwoman Kay Paar said.

Paar had sided Tuesday with the majority of her City Council in a 3-1 vote to support incorporation.

Menlo Park City Councilman Billy Ray White was angered by the LAFCO move.

"Once again, the ruling class has smashed the hopes and desires of a group of people working for self-de-

termination," said White, a longtime supporter of incorporation.

LAFCO's Wednesday night action was devastating for incorporation supporters largely because it placed the area west of the Bayshore Freeway in the sphere of influence of Menlo Park.

Much of the sales and property tax revenue needed to build a financially sound city would have come from the west of Bayshore Freeway area, studies on the issue have found.

And, while the proposed one-year holding sphere is designed to improve East Palo Alto's sagging economic condition and reduce crime, proponents of incorporation, among them Driessel, are skeptical.

Please see LAFCO, B-4

LAFCO

Continued from B-1

Driessel explained his views.

"John Ward (who proposed the holding sphere Wednesday night) has been a supervisor for five years. During that time he has been a member of the Redevelopment Authority and has had control over huge amounts of Housing and Community Development funds. He is also on the Criminal Justice Council. If he couldn't find solutions to these problems when he had both the money and was occupying those two roles, as well as being a board member, I can't imagine how he can do it now. I only surmise that he has seen 'Superman II' too many times."

At the hearing, Ward said the task force would implement the East Palo Alto Community Plan and work to solve the area's crime and economic problems.

Subsequently he could not be reached for comment.

While Ward has not elaborated on the proposal, east of Bayshore Freeway agencies, like the Ravenswood Recreation and Parks District and the East Palo Alto Water District probably would have representatives on the task force. Private interests might also have task force representatives, according to Lemuel Summey, LAFCO legal counsel and San Mateo County assistant district attorney.

East Palo Alto's incorporation would be studied again in a year, according to LAFCO's Wednesday night decision. The same alternatives — incorporation, annexation to Menlo Park or status quo — then would be re-evaluated.

Backers of incorporation, both in East Palo Alto and in Menlo Park, have said they will fight to the bitter end.

"We are down, but we are not out," Oakes said Thursday.

"We didn't intend to ever dissolve (EPACCI), because we know that we have a city to build," she said of the incorporation committee.

Driessel held out hope that LAFCO's 3-2 vote against incorporation could be reversed. He felt it may be possible to change the mind of LAFCO member Jeannine Hodge, a Brisbane City Council member.

Incorporation backers had thought her to be an ally, and were surprised at her vote Wednesday in favor of the "holding sphere" concept.

If she reversed her position, a 3-2 vote against cityhood would become a 3-2 vote in favor. Ward and John Lindley, LAFCO's representative from the general public, oppose incorporation. LAFCO members Arlen Gregorio, who is also a county supervisor, and Art Lepore, a Millbrae City Council member, backed incorporation.

Hodge had wanted to delay a decision until next week. She complained during the session Wednesday that she was tired and not certain she could make

a good decision after 11 p.m., when the vote was taken.

She said after the meeting that she wanted to back incorporation, but was not convinced by the evidence presented at three public hearings. So she voted for the "holding sphere."

If the "holding sphere" decision stands, a proposed April 1982 incorporation election will not be held.

The first battle in the war to save the incorporation effort probably will occur Monday, when LAFCO will meet to formalize its Wednesday night decision by reviewing and adopting the paperwork enacting Ward's plan.

The meeting will be held at 5 p.m. at the Chambers of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors in the Hall of Justice and Records in Redwood City.

A second skirmish will come when the commission holds hearings on the applications to incorporate and to annex. B. Sherman Coffman, LAFCO's top administrator, wants the commission to rule on the applications Oct. 14.

However, attorney Summey said Thursday that the commission is not likely to reverse its decision, either in the Monday meeting or in subsequent hearings.

"After having deliberated so long, after so much testimony, it is very unlikely that they would change the sphere decision or do anything differently," Summey explained.

Summey said advocates of incorporation may "appeal" LAFCO's decision. But he said he does not believe that an appeal holds much promise.

"An appeal technically means an appeal to a higher authority. It might not be absolutely correct to characterize the procedure as an appeal. It would better be called a petition to LAFCO for reconsideration," Summey explained.

"But the commission is not required to entertain such a petition. They have full discretion to say no," Summey said.

It also could vote to hold another hearing and deliberate further, he said.

Finally, LAFCO will make a recommendation to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors.

If the commission's recommendation remains unchanged, and the board agrees to the proposal, it then probably would proceed to act on the recommendation and annex the west of Bayshore Freeway area to Menlo Park, a move Menlo Park residents might oppose.

Menlo Park Mayor Peg Gunn is in the enemy camp, she said Thursday.

"The majority of the citizens of Menlo Park do not want to annex East Palo Alto. Most of the citizens of East Palo Alto don't want to be part of Menlo Park," Gunn said.

Regardless, the annexation would have to be approved only by a vote of the residents of the area to be annexed, Summey said. The residents of Menlo Park would not vote on the annexation, Summey said.