

# Incorporation requires work, experts advise E. Palo Alto

By EMMETT EGGLESTON

A panel of experts gave a generally positive appraisal Monday night of East Palo Alto's prospects for incorporation. However, they warned it will take a lot of work and community participation.

The East Palo Alto Municipal Council called the special meeting in the wake of elections earlier this month. Two new council members, Gertrude Wilks and Frank "Omwale" Satterwhite, campaigned on pro-incorporation platforms.

It was the first time the subject of incorporation has been seriously considered since 1967.

That move was defeated by technical errors resulting in a rejection by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). The commission also said there was an insufficient economic base for incorporation in 1967.

But on Monday night, many persons felt a new attempt could succeed.

After hearing several speakers, San Mateo County Supervisor-elect John Ward said, "What at first seemed insurmountable, now seems feasible."

Assembled on a panel were Sherman Coffman, executive director of LAFCO; Ray Croft, of the state controller's office; Ken Franks, a League of California Cities spokesman; Robert Meyer, the administrative officer for Woodside; and Mitchell Hunt, an assistant to the mayor of Portola Valley.

Also among the panelists were Ted Gillis, of the San Mateo County Legal Aid Society, and Wayne McFadden, an attorney who spearheaded the incorporation, and became the first mayor, of Foster City.

The panel gave technical advice on the subject, explaining the basic steps toward incorporating the community and the hurdles which will have to be cleared.

However, its members also cautioned that incorporation requires a commitment from those who seek it and considerable advance planning.

Approvals eventually will be required from LAFCO, the county board of supervisors, and a majority of the voters.

Most of the panelists agreed that the earliest it could be put before the voters would be in November 1975. Gillis said incorporation normally takes about 13 months from initial preparation and the added requirement for an environmental impact statement could add two more months.

Talk about incorporating East Palo Alto goes back many years. Residents in 1931 threatened incorporation in response to a proposed merger of San Mateo and San Francisco counties.

Since then, the issue has emerged at intervals over the years.

At present about 18,000 persons live in the community. The population is predominantly black and there are indications of a growing Mexican-American minority.

East Palo Alto occupies about 2.5 square miles. It is east of Bayshore Freeway.

Croft, of the state controller's office, said similar cities in the 17,000 to 20,000 population range receive revenues from the state of about \$408,000 on the average each year.

Most of that is from gasoline and motor vehicle taxes collected by the state, which then apportions some

of the money among the cities.

The municipal council governs the community. Its actions are subject to review and approval by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors.

The council may receive two recommendations next Monday night. Vance Black, the acting executive assistant to the council, said he will prepare a summary of the panelist's suggestions and also submit alternative organizational plans for the

formation of a task force on incorporation.

The task force will be assigned to study the economics of incorporation. Among its other duties will be determining if total property and other taxes will be lowered or raised by incorporating the community.

It also may advise on whether the city should contract for such things as police and fire services or establish its own city services at the outset.