

McCloskey hired to fight East Palo Alto cityhood

By Chris Kenrick
Times Tribune staff

Opponents of the incorporation of East Palo Alto have hired former Congressman Paul N. McCloskey to represent them before government agencies considering cityhood.

McCloskey, who now practices law in Palo Alto, Tuesday presented county officials a 15-page memo asking that any incorporation election be postponed until 1984 and that the unincorporated neighborhoods west of Bayshore freeway not be included in a new city.

McCloskey, a Republican who represented East Palo Alto in Congress until the area was reapportioned in 1981, noted his "long and intimate association with the affairs and problems of East Palo Alto."

"I would not have undertaken the legal representation here involved, but for the fact that my own personal beliefs are in strong agreement with the two propositions presented to you," he said.

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In asking for postponement of a cityhood election, McCloskey pointed to the "shakiness of the proposed new city's financial structure."

"I believe that premature incorporation could freeze, if not exacerbate, both the poverty and racial imbalance which now exist in the area," he said.

He said that in the future, he believes East Palo Alto should either incorporate as a city or be annexed to Menlo Park, but not before it develops a greater tax base.

"The uncertainties of incorporation (now) are exceedingly grave," he said.

McCloskey was hired by a group of West of Bayshore residents known as the West of Bayshore Committee for Annexation to Menlo Park (WBCAMP). The group consists largely of homeowners who fear that their community will go downhill if it becomes

part of a new city of East Palo Alto.

An opposing group of West of Bayshore residents consisting largely of tenants has campaigned in favor of incorporation.

Both WBCAMP and the tenants group claim that they represent the majority of West of Bayshore residents.

Last year, cityhood backers gathered signatures from about 400 of the 3,800 West of Bayshore residents in favor of incorporation. In a signature-gathering drive this year, they concentrated on the neighborhood north of Euclid Avenue and gained the support of more than 50 percent of the registered voters.

But McCloskey's group, which favors annexation of West of Bayshore to Menlo Park, claims it represents a majority of the area's residents.

McCloskey argued that by the legal criterion of "social and economic interdepen-

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dence." West of Bayshore belongs with Menlo Park—not with the neighborhood east of the freeway.

"The construction of Bayshore Highway and subsequent history have irrevocably changed the true 'East Palo Alto' from those lands between San Francisquito Creek and the bay to those lands between Bayshore Highway and the bay," McCloskey said.

McCloskey said he has favored the incorporation of East Palo Alto since he was first elected to Congress in 1976. However, he said, before the community will have the financial resources to incorporate, it will have to solve its crime problems so that it can attract developers.

The San Mateo County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) was expected to decide late today whether to recommend an incorporation election for the June ballot.