

To: Members, Local Agency Formation Commission      Date: 25 January 1983

From: Robert Alexander

Subject: File No. 82-21

I attended your board meeting on January 19, 1983, and have read the consultant's report and the January 18, 1983 report by your executive director.

There are several questions and concerns that I believe should be discussed and clarified. I will attempt to outline several in this correspondence. It would have been much easier to express these concerns verbally during the public hearing process. Since the public hearing has not been closed, this possibility does still exist; therefore, I am requesting that I be given the opportunity to state these concerns to your commission on Wednesday. If my request to be heard is not granted, I'm hopeful that your commission will be able to answer the following questions and make needed clarifications in order that those affected know their options:

Throughout the documentation and hearings regarding the possibility of annexation to Menlo Park, the question of "level of service" that Menlo Park could provide was discussed. It should be pointed out that levels of service throughout Menlo Park vary greatly. The services that the Sharon Heights area of Menlo Park receives are entirely on a different level than what the primarily minority area of Belle Haven receives.

In fact, the Belle Haven area has lost over fifty percent of what Menlo Park allocated it in the budget five years ago. The Sharon Heights and Belle Haven areas have different school districts serving them. There is also a vast difference in the level of service in the areas of recreation, street and tree maintenance, neighborhood beautification, police, and disaster relief. Many of the funds that Menlo Park spends in the Belle Haven area come from Federal Revenue Sharing and other federal sources.

What level of service will East Palo Alto receive if annexation takes place? Will it be comparable to Sharon Heights or Belle Haven or somewhere in the middle?

In the report of your executive officer of January 18, 1983, there are a number of statements which, I believe, are misrepresentations of facts. It is clear that he is not dealing with possible alternatives in an objective manner. Your executive officer is basing his arguments for annexation on the lack of success of the Ravenswood Elementary School District, the East Palo Alto Sanitary District, the Ravenswood Recreation and Park District, and the East Palo Alto Municipal Council. Granted that the success of these entities have not been outstanding, they are improving. Additional dollars and coordination of staffs, boards, and resources have been their greatest need - great obstacles to surmount. Incorporation is a better answer to solving these problems than annexation.

Your executive officer further argues that Menlo Park's very strong proven record for providing services to new developed areas and for providing housing and industrial development is clear. Where are these areas and whom do they impact the most? He cites Menlo Park's "action to form a redevelopment agency to further upgrade and assist the residents of Belle Haven." The Las Pulgas Redevelopment District is the agency to which he refers. This agency has done little to improve housing in Belle Haven; in fact, it threatens to lower the

value of homes in East Palo Alto. No consideration of the prospect of flooding East Palo Alto properties was given in the proposed development of the Dumbarton Distribution Center, a major development of the redevelopment agency. Your executive officer implies that problems relating to storm drainage, flooding, crime prevention, schools, recreation and segregation will be solved by annexation to Menlo Park. This is not true. Our high school students will still attend schools in Atherton and other peninsula cities; we will still have segregation because the incomes of many residents will not rise from the lower end of the scale as a result of annexation.

I could go on and point to many other areas of this report which are invalid; however, time does not permit me to do so. What I do know from my experience in working for the City of Menlo Park is that there is a lack of concern for the areas east of Bayshore including Belle Haven. There is no doubt that Menlo Park does have the ability to serve the entire area. The question is whether or not Menlo Park has the desire to provide a higher level of service than the status quo or incorporation alternatives. Based on previous history, I do not believe Menlo Park has that desire.

Relative to maintaining the status quo, it appears this is unlikely. I have read comments in the newspaper by Supervisor Ward and have also reviewed comments by your executive officer. It is clear that the \$500,000 needed to operate the Municipal Council may be in jeopardy. I would like to know if your commission believes the status quo can be maintained? If it cannot, this should be made clear to the voters. What will be the result is annexation or incorporation fail.

To continue to allow portions of the unincorporated area of East Palo Alto be annexed to other jurisdictions is also unacceptable; this continual erosion will preclude any future incorporation because of insufficient dollars and other resources. The proposed Dumbarton Distribution Center was annexed to Menlo Park from East Palo Alto. If the Dumbarton Distribution Center is developed, it will provide Menlo Park with approximately \$60,000.00 in taxes every year. East Palo Alto will receive no dollars or resources but will be impacted very, very negatively: it may be flooded; it will be polluted and will be forced to deal with industry within 50 feet of the backyards of residences and directly adjacent to local schools. Annexation to Menlo Park will not solve this problem. Menlo Park would actually be in violation of several of its ordinances. East Palo Alto would become an unwanted stepchild much like Belle Haven's current situation. The population of Belle Haven has been used basically to secure federal dollars that many times have been used outside the area.

Incorporation would provide new tools for the citizens of East Palo Alto to use on ongoing problems. It would enable the city to protect its existing land (and even to get back some land that may have been taken illegally). It would provide a better, more efficient approach to crime prevention, traffic control, and citizen involvement. Incorporation would bring the decision making potential to residents who are directly affected; lastly, it would provide a mechanism for eliminating non-responsive and unaccountable decision makers.

What is the status quo? Status quo for East Palo Alto will be the continued annexation of land; disregard of the residential quality of life; increased crime, overcrowding and misuse of land; increased traffic with diesel trucks, industrial development, and the sound of pump stations foretelling the possibility of flooding; and, of course, the bottom line - Menlo Park doesn't want us!!!

Menlo Park claims it doesn't want the status quo (even according to your staff), but it does attempt to put industry on lands annexed from us without consideration ~~of~~ our schools and residents.

The key to development in East Palo Alto is commercial and industrial growth. This means East Palo Alto must have access to industrial areas. This will create greater value for our lands and promote industry into the area. Improvements to Bay Road and the proposed "Southern Access" would certainly provide this access; however, those plans are no longer in existence. Why? Because East Palo Altans did not get an opportunity to be heard regarding the scrapping of these plans.

Incorporation will force the leadership in this community to be responsive to the people who elect them. The new city council will be able to make decisions, not just recommendations. Currently, the Municipal Council is being blamed for its lack of success. I do not place blame on the members of the Council; they have responsibility without authority.

Placing all of CSA #5 within the sphere of influence for a future incorporated city is the only really positive action that your commission can take. Taxation without representation can no longer be tolerated. Let us be allowed to vote for our independence. Wouldn't you want the same for your community?

*Robert A. Alexander*