

# Local News

## East Palo Alto cityhood debate isn't over

By Steve Taylor  
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No one believes the debate over incorporating East Palo Alto is over, despite Tuesday's election results.

Voters approved three measures that would have made East Palo Alto a self-governing city, but rejected a fourth measure by a 41-vote margin.

In effect, persons living outside of the proposed city killed the incorporation effort. Voters in the East Palo Alto Sanitary District who live in Menlo Park and an unincorporated area next to Menlo Park voted overwhelmingly against dissolving the district.

Since Proposition C, the sanitary district measure, lost by 41 votes, passage of other measures meant nothing. To authorize incorporation, all four measures had to be adopted.

### Incorporation backers may seek another chance to vote

Barbara Mouton, Municipal Council chairwoman and a leader of the cityhood forces, said Wednesday a new application for an incorporation election will likely be filed with the county Local Agency Formation Commission. LAFCO permission is required before a second election can be held.

Supervisors Arlen Gregorio and John Ward, LAFCO members who backed incorporation, said they expect another election to be scheduled. Ward suggested one can be held this November.

B. Sherman Coffman, LAFCO's executive officer, said nothing can be done until someone asks LAFCO

to do something. He said an effort could be made to get LAFCO to change its mind on incorporation and back some other plan, like annexing parts of East Palo Alto into Menlo Park.

LAFCO voted 3-2 in favor of the cityhood effort late last year after initially voting 3-2 against incorporation. Ward proved to be the deciding vote on the issue, and he indicated Wednesday he still supports incorporation.

He said Wednesday he was surprised by the election outcome and feels the voters can get another chance to approve incorporation.

Meanwhile, county officials said that because the incorporation effort failed, there will be less money for everyone in San Mateo County.

With the cityhood drive at least stalled for now, it will remain the county government's responsibility to maintain East Palo Alto's roads, inspect its buildings, plan its future construction and finance operations of the Municipal Council, an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors.

That must be paid for with an estimated \$2.2 million per year in county government funds, according to a report compiled by former Assistant County Manager Jay Gellert.

Even if incorporation is approved in a later elec-

Please see FUTURE, B-3

## FUTURE

Continued from B-1

tion, the new city will have suffered because of the delay, said County Manager Dave Nichols. East Palo Alto will begin losing thousands of dollars in state tax funds on July 2 that it would have received as a city government, but which cannot be collected on its behalf by the county government.

That is because taxes collected on items such as gasoline, tobacco and alcohol sales go to California's city governments and cannot be given to county governments instead. As a result, the state's cities will get a little more because East Palo Alto did not incorporate, and San Mateo County will get nothing extra, Nichols said.

Added to this is uncertainty in Sacramento. Legislators are considering a number of methods to cut state government spending that could mean extra costs for local governments, Gellert said.

That could mean less money for the county to assist a new East Palo Alto city government — if one is ever established — or less money for the county to maintain services in unincorporated East Palo Alto.

At the same time, however, Nichols and Gellert see a silver lining on this unexpected cloud.

Nichols said about \$500,000 in county funds reserved to help East Palo Alto incorporate could be used in other areas. The money could help alleviate financial problems that are growing within the county government, he said.