

LAFCO reviews Freedom area annexation bid

Bigger annexation plan is also in the works

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SANTA CRUZ — A proposal to annex 35 acres of central Freedom into Watsonville will be considered tomorrow, and a larger annexation is in the works.

The annexation request revives what had been a trend in the 1960s and 1970s: annexation of unincorporated Freedom into the city. Between 1964 and 1979, there were 21 annexations; there have been three since.

The Local Agency Formation Commission, which oversees annexations, is expected to rule tomorrow on a request to annex

130 parcels off Green Valley Road, just east of Freedom Boulevard.

A proposal to annex most of the developed area along Freedom Boulevard between Loma Prieta Avenue and the freeway is in the early stages. If approved, it would be the largest single annexation of Freedom into the city since LAFCO started in 1964.

The area LAFCO will consider tomorrow, known as the Green Valley-Carnation area, includes 89 homes, 26 parcels with condominiums, four parcels with medical offices, and seven

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undeveloped parcels. Carnation Drive is part of the annexation area.

LAFCO's vote is the final discretionary government action; only a protest by owners of 25 percent of the property could stop it after that.

The city is the official applicant for the annexation, but it was first proposed by Gordon Kobayashi, who owns vacant land on Green Valley Road.

Pat McCormick, LAFCO executive director, said Kobayashi talked to him about annexation, and McCormick said he didn't want to see a "strip annexation" of just the land on Green Valley Road. Kobayashi then went out and organized property owners before proposing the larger annexation to the city and LAFCO.

The city has already "prezoned" two parcels south of Carnation Drive, one of them Kobayashi's,

for commercial development. The parcels had been zoned for offices.

The proposed annexation of the area along Airport Boulevard is called the Freedom School annexation. The drive to bring the area into the city was started by residents after the murder of 14-year-old Marianna Zavala on the school playground in 1992.

Freedom School is in the county, but the Green Valley Apartments adjacent to the school are in the city and patrolled by city police.

The annexation would bring in 231 parcels, all but 13 of them residential, on 93 acres. Prezoning of the area was approved by the city Planning Commission last night; it will go to the City Council either later this month or in July.

If the Council approves the prezoning, the annexation issue then goes to LAFCO.

LAFCO meets at 8:30 a.m. tomorrow at the county Governmental Center in Santa Cruz to consider the Green Valley-Carnation annexation.