

Watsonville council to consider Tai property tonight

Approval first step in annexation process

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WATSONVILLE — After two months of discussion, Watsonville councilmembers are expected to vote this evening on whether to add 646 acres to the city's sphere of influence.

The much-debated plan expands the sphere-of-influence boundary outside the city limits to include land city planners are considering for development.

Changing the sphere of influence is the first step toward city annexation of the property, west of Lee

Road and owned primarily by Vincent Tai, a San Francisco developer.

"I'm hoping that the council will give it a 'yes' all the way," said Mayor Al Alcalá, speaking in support of the proposal. The mayor said he expects a long debate between councilmembers, but he wouldn't predict the council's decision.

Councilman Dennis Osmer, who said he opposes developing the Tai property, said the proposal for the Tai property is weakened by the city's attempting to juggle too many annexation plans at the same time. The council recently approved annexation of about 200 acres in the southwest corner of town by Riverside Drive and Highway 1.

The acreage under consideration on the Tai property has been earmarked for housing, according to the developers, who say 50 percent of the land will be used for low-income housing.

While proponents of the plan say the city needs to build affordable

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housing, opponents contend that the land under consideration is prime farm land that should be preserved.

Included in the proposal is a tradeoff, in which the city will relinquish plans for urban development on 214 acres of farm land south of Corralitos Creek.

A third public hearing on the matter is expected tonight, but Alcalá said he would limit it to 30 minutes.

Other items on the council's

agenda include the following:

■ A survey of youth who use Watsonville recreation facilities will be reviewed by councilmembers. The survey was conducted to evaluate city youth to create effective programs at recreation facilities.

■ The council is expected to declare weeds and debris on private property a public nuisance and order the Watsonville Fire Department to give notice to property owners in violation of the law.

■ The council is to hear reports from Watsonville Police Chief Terry Medina on gang violence reduc-

tion and Interim Community Development Administrator Dave Williams on affordable housing in Watsonville.

■ The council will consider forming a task force to inform residents of the importance of the \$180,000 landscaping and lighting maintenance assessment district tax which will come before voters this summer.

■ The council will consider installing two new stop signs on Sudden Street at the intersection of East Fifth Street.

The Watsonville City Council will meet today at 4 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. at City Hall, 250 Main Street.