

Watsonville - Annexation

Farm Bureau backs annexation

WATSONVILLE — The Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau has jumped into the fray and given conditional support for development of the Franich apple orchard on East Lake Avenue.

However, the Farm Bureau Board of Directors also has asked that if annexation occurs, it should be decided at the local level, not through the state Legislature.

"After polling our members, it appears that a majority of farmers are supportive of some development on the Franich property," said Farm Bureau President Tom Am Rhein. "Even though a ma-

jority of farmers support developing the property, many have reservations about its impact on farm land and the city and county infrastructure."

The Farm Bureau has called for five conditions to be met if annexation occurs: establish a 200-foot buffer between housing and adjacent farms; build only high-density, affordable housing on the land; build proper roads to handle the increase in traffic and improve East Lake Avenue, Martinelli Street and Holo-han Road; require the developer to pay all costs related to mitigating

impacts on traffic, schools, utilities and emergency services; and allow greenhouses to be built on land surrounding the Franich property.

Some 15 percent of the Farm Bureau's membership responded to the poll, with responses nearly divided between the supporters and opponents of annexing the land.

Responses from farmers ranged from supporting annexation if affordable housing is available for farm workers, to opposing annexation on any prime agricultural land, especially when it would affect surrounding farm operations.