

Watsonville - Annexation

Pajaro annexation on the agenda

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WATSONVILLE — The possibility of annexing Pajaro into Watsonville and a controversial 120-unit affordable housing project are among the items slated for tonight's Watsonville City Council meeting.

The idea of annexing Pajaro into Watsonville was first brought up at meetings last year when various annexation options for Watsonville were discussed. Since then, city staff explored the issue and found that there are several legal obstacles to Watsonville absorbing its smaller neighbor from Monterey County.

Among the main legal findings relating to annexing Pajaro that

are to be presented are the following:

- Territory may not be annexed to a city unless it is located in the same county.
- Cities may annex territory in another county by moving the county line.
- Residents may petition to create a new county.

According to a state legislative report, not one of California's 440 cities crosses a county line because state law forbids it. The prohibition stems from a 1959 case of the County of San Mateo vs. City Council of Palo Alto in which the city tried to annex an unincorporated area in neighboring San Mateo County. The annexation failed. However, a 1965 University

of California study pointed out that many other states already allow cross-county annexations. In that study, it was found that county officials generally think such annexations create problems and city officials see them as solving problems.

The Watsonville City Council is not scheduled to take any action on the matter tonight.

The matter of a 120-unit housing project at 327 Errington Road could prove volatile at tonight's meeting. The project has already received approval from the Watsonville Planning Commission, but Watsonville mayor Dennis Osmer has taken a firm stand against the project.

The location for the project is on

lightly developed agricultural land west of Watsonville, off of West Beach Road.

On Friday Osmer submitted an appeal of the planning commission's approval of the project, listing 14 points of concern. The gist of his complaint is that the parcel is on land that fits into the city's plans for industrial development and does not help the city's stand in it's current fight with the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) over annexing land west of Highway 1 for industrial development.

Osmer also pointed out that the city's Community Development Department was not given a chance to review the project and city procedures have been bypassed for the project.

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