

# Franich <sup>5/25/88</sup> Watsonville annexation talks set

By JENNIFER KOSS  
STAFF WRITER

The Watsonville City Council moved last night toward finding a local solution to the stalled annexation of attorney Tony Franich's 72-acre apple orchard to the city.

Council members voted unanimously to direct City Manager John Radin to sit down with Pat McCormick, executive director of the Local Agency Formation Commission — the agency charged with ruling on proposed annexations — and discuss what needs to be done.

It was reportedly agreed at a meeting last Thursday in Sacramento that the two agencies would work out a "memorandum of understanding" on the Franich annexation. If such an understanding couldn't be reached, state legislation allowing the annexation, written by Assemblyman Daniel Hauser of Arcata, would be brought back before the Legislature.

"If the city of Watsonville and LAFCO cannot come to an agreement on how we are to proceed on this, Mr. Hauser will proceed with this bill," Councilman Rex Clark said, "and I feel quite confident that he's got the votes to get it through."

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Radin said he would report to the council at Tuesday's budget session the upshot of his discussion with McCormick. He and Clark also said there seems to be some confusion over the Sacramento meeting.

Clark said this morning his understanding of the purpose of the meeting, for example, was to write up some amendments to the Franich bill to make it more palatable to all involved parties. Instead of amendments, however, the discussion led to an agreement to try to resolve the problem locally.

Clark said confusion also exists over the proposed annexation's standing with LAFCO. The confusion is apparent in a letter written by State Assemblyman Dominic Cortese, D-San Jose, and sent to Mayor Betty Murphy and LAFCO Chairman Bob Garcia.

Cortese indicates that the Franich annexation is returning to LAFCO to begin anew its journey through the process when, in fact, the matter has been stalled at LAFCO and will pick up where it left off.

McCormick apprised the council last night that Cortese's letter will be discussed at LAFCO's June 1 meeting.

Hauser's bill, Franich's most

recent attempt to make an end-run around LAFCO, would allow the annexation provided housing developed on the land includes 15 percent "affordable" units. Its obvious intent to sidestep local control created a furor among Santa Cruz County officials — most notably, Supervisor Gary Patton — and prompted the involvement of Assemblyman Sam Farr, D-Carmel.

The deal subsequently struck in Sacramento was to place the Franich bill in abeyance in a joint Senate/Assembly conference committee. Meanwhile, city officials agreed to sit down with LAFCO representatives and try hammering out a memorandum of understanding, as to what the process will entail in refiling an annexation application with LAFCO.

The deal was the latest in a years-long series of maneuverings over the Franich annexation. First approved by LAFCO in 1982, the annexation was later challenged in court by a local environmental group concerned over the development of farmland.

The annexation was then overturned on a technicality — a decision upheld on appeal — and Franich has been trying ever since to win annexation without going back to a new LAFCO board of directors, which he fears would not be sympathetic to his cause.