

✓ **Assemblyman adds confusion to Franich annexation**

Watsonville -

By JAMIE MARKS

Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — A new wrinkle has surfaced in the attempt to work out a compromise on the 72-acre Franich annexation to the city of Watsonville.

A letter from San Jose Assemblyman Dominic Cortese, the Democratic chairman of the Local Agency Committee, outlining the gist of a meeting in Sacramento last Thursday has confused Watsonville city officials, property owner Tony Franich and Local Agency Formation Commission Executive Director Pat McCormick.

The letter, which arrived Tuesday, prompted the City Council to delay action on Councilman Dennis Osmer's move to refile its annexation application with LAFCO. Instead, the council authorized City Manager John Radin to negotiate with LAFCO Executive Director McCormick on the ground rules for consideration of the annexation.

Cortese cites four things that must be done by June 7. They are: the city has to state when it intends to "submit its annexation application to LAFCO;" LAFCO should outline its proposed time lines for reviewing it; LAFCO should explain what documents will be required; and LAFCO should issue a statement that it will consider alternative proposals "which include 19 and 72 acres."

Several city officials said they were puzzled by the

first requirement because the City Council and LAFCO already approved the annexation of Franich's apple orchard six years ago. In 1987 it was reversed by the state Court of Appeal who ordered the issue returned to LAFCO for consideration of a "partial annexation" of less than the entire 72-acre parcel.

"We already have an annexation application that was approved," said Councilman Rex Clark. Clark and other city officials don't believe the city has to begin the process from ground zero.

Clark and Franich were surprised Cortese didn't mention a "memorandum of understanding," which they said was at the heart of the agreement reached last week with four Assemblymen, themselves and County Supervisor Gary Patton.

City Manager Radin and Clark talked with several assembly members Monday at the League of California Cities conference in Sacramento. Radin said he received "an entirely different viewpoint" of the purported accord from the one he came away with from the meeting.

"It will require some negotiations to get this off of dead center," he said. Toward that end, Radin and McCormick will meet today to try to reach an agreement on what needs to be done.

McCormick said he's not sure what kind of environmental impact report will be needed or who will do it — the city or LAFCO. Until those issues are

resolved, LAFCO will be hard pressed to set a time line. Meanwhile, LAFCO will meet June 1 to discuss Cortese's letter.

One complication is that there appears to be a fight brewing between Cortese and Assemblyman Dan Hauser, D-Arcata, who amended one of his bills to

accommodate Franich's annexation.

"There may be a slightly different point of view coming from the two assemblymen," said Clark. Later, he added Hauser intends to proceed with his Assembly bill, AB 4367, if LAFCO and the city cannot come to an agreement soon.