

# Freedom area annex planned

Watsonville - Annexation

## Council members unanimously approve rezoning

By VICTORIA MANLEY  
STAFF WRITER

**WATSONVILLE** — The Watsonville City Council unanimously voted to begin the rezoning process for a land annexation in Freedom between Green Valley Road and Airport Boulevard.

Watsonville city planner Charles Eadie said that because the proposal is in the preliminary stages, city staff has not yet calculated how many acres it intends to prezone nor do they know the population of the area. But he estimated it would be around 100 acres. "This is the first step in a process in which there are a whole lot of steps that have to take place," he said.

In the next few months, Eadie said city staff will fine-tune the proposal, including determining a proposed number of acres and eliciting more community member input. After that background study has been done, he will approach the council this winter to seek approval of the rezoning.

From there, the next step would be bringing the proposal before the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) and, eventually, holding an election. "All that could take another year, basically, to go through," Eadie said.

The proposal comes after years of discussion with area residents and business owners, who Eadie said are

generally in support of rezoning. The motivation behind annexing the land, he said, is that the land is considered unincorporated, urbanized land — something the city has stated it would like to annex in its General Plan. "The policy established in our General Plan is to pursue the annexation of urbanized areas," he said.

"(This proposal) is not to take the lead, but follow the initiative of the residents and property owners in the area," he said, adding that half a dozen meetings regarding this has been held in the past two years.

City finance director Eric Frost participated in meeting with area residents. "We've spent a year meeting with different groups, and we have purposely gone slower on this because we wanted to talk to residents," he said. The approval at Tuesday's meeting does not commit the city to prezone or to annex — the ultimate authority in whether an annexation will go through lies with the registered-voter residents in the area, Eadie said.

Residents Lani Imperio and his wife attended the meeting to express their support for the proposal, outlining various reasons why residents and business owners would support an annexation — including the use of city services such as police, cable services and the possible installation of street lights. Should the land be annexed, the city would be spending \$3,500 to fund the background study and an \$800 as an application fee to LAFCO. Alternatively, the city would also benefit from the added revenues of property tax, sales tax and utility user taxes.

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