

Council compromises on Tai property decision

By SCOTT DAVID BRENNAN
STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — After two months of discussion, the Watsonville City Council voted Tuesday night to add 646 acres of agricultural property to the city's urban limit line, but chose not to add it to the sphere of influence.

Putting the property, **Council considers primarily Burger King — owned by** **page 6**

San Francisco developer Vincent Tai, within the city's urban limit line means the land is now considered an urban reserve for potential development by the city. But it won't change the city's sphere of influence line, a legal designation requiring approval by the Local Agency Formation Commission, which is the first step toward annexation.

An urban reserve is a designation created by the Watsonville City Council to indicate the areas into which it wants to grow — rather like a person saying he wants to move to San Francisco next year.

In an unexpected development, City Councilman Todd McFarren struck a compromise between supporters and opponents of the Tai project by delet-

ing "sphere of influence" language from the resolution that was passed last night. The compromise won the support of all seven council members, who also approved the controversial environmental impact review of the property.

"It was a superb finesse by Todd McFarren — careful thinking and a sensible demonstration," said Dick Bernard, a member of the Watsonville Wetlands Watch, which opposes development on the Tai property west of Lee Road.

"The idea is we're swapping land in the urban reserve," said McFarren. About 200 acres south of Corralitos Creek were removed from the city's urban reserve in exchange for the 646-acre Tai property's addition.

During three nights of public hearings over the past two months, plan supporters said the city needs to build affordable housing and Tai developers said they would build



McFarren

Survey shows 29% of girls associate with gangs

By SCOTT DAVID BRENNAN
STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — More than a quarter of the teenage girls who use city recreation facilities have some affiliation with gangs, according to a survey presented Tuesday to city council members.

The survey of 103 youths, with an average age of between 16 and 18, was taken in November among city youths at Watsonville recreation facilities. It was conducted by Lisa Lampmann, director of the city's \$2.9 million federal Enterprise Community grant, to assess the situation for Watsonville youth and find out how to serve them better.

Among the survey results:

■ Gangs: 23 percent overall said they hang out with gangs,

See COUNCIL, page 6

See SURVEY page 6

COUNCIL

From page 1

1,800 housing units, half of which would be considered affordable housing. Opponents contend the land under consideration is prime farm land and a native animal habitat that should be preserved.

While support for adding the Tai property to the sphere of influence previously had been strong among council members, the council was afraid LAFCO wouldn't approve both the Riverside and the Tai properties.

LAFCO already is considering the Riverside property, which is slated for industrial development. The Tai property has not been sent to the commission.

"Riverside and Tai are colliding," said Councilman Dennis Osmer. "We need a consensus. We have too much on the plate."

Councilwoman Betty Bobeda signaled her support for the compromise, asking to postpone the Tai project for housing and first secure LAFCO's approval of the Riverside project. "I am making a choice for industry and jobs," she said.

Mayor Al Alcalá, who supported approving the Tai project, said, "I'm having a very hard time understanding what direction this council is going."

After the decision, both proponents and opponents claimed victory.

"We took a step forward," said Watsonville attorney Omar James, who represents Tai and Associates, the development company. James said he will press forward next month and ask the council again for sphere of influence inclusion and residential pre-zoning on the Tai property.

Project opponent Bernard said he, too, was pleased. "This allows the city to take a look at in-fill within the city limits," he said, referring to building housing on land already in the city before developing outward.

SURVEY

From page 1

including 29 percent of the girls and 22 percent of boys. Of those who said they were in gangs, 59 percent said they wanted out.

■ Alcohol and drugs: 11 percent of respondents said they used alcohol, and 11 percent said they used drugs.

■ School: 26 percent overall said they were not in school, 29 percent of girls, and 25 percent of boys. Of those not in school, 30 percent said they wanted help resuming their educations.

■ Language: 68 percent completed the survey in English; 32 percent in Spanish.

Lampmann said she would like to continue doing surveys every three to six months to evaluate the progress of recreation programs. She also said the parks department will try and develop programs to get young women involved in positive activities.