

Watsonville - Annexation

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Watsonville looking for more time to appeal annexation ruling

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WATSONVILLE — The city of Watsonville plans to ask the Local Agency Formation Commission Wednesday for more time so it can reword its request to annex more than 700 acres — including 219 acres for an industrial park at Highway 1 and Riverside Drive.

LAFCO voted down most of Watsonville's request in October. A month later, the City Council appointed a subcommittee to develop "alternative language," and put the request to LAFCO once again.

The city will likely ask for a 30-day extension, LAFCO Executive Director Pat McCormick said.

None of the subcommittee members — Mayor Dennis Osmer, LAF-

CO member and City Councilman Lowell Hurst and Councilman Todd McFarren — were available Monday. "The subcommittee met and decided to ask for an extension to hopefully have some good dialogue and come to an agreement on conditions," interim City Manager Carlos Palacios said. In October, LAFCO voted to grant Watsonville only 94 acres at Riverside Drive and another 249 acres on Buena Vista Drive. The commission denied annexation of any land west of Highway 1.

LAFCO also voted 5-2 to place three conditions on the annexation of the 94 acres. The conditions required the city to:

- Further study the Landmark property off Errington Road and

determine its development potential and, if possible, develop the land for industrial use;

- Accept recommendations made by the Pajaro Valley Futures Project, funded by the Packard Foundation, on the city's already available land; and

- Enter into an agreement with the county and the state Coastal Commission to not file more sphere-of-influence requests made west of Highway 1 without agreement of all three bodies.

LAFCO Commissioner and County Supervisor Mardi Wormhoudt, who wrote the conditions, said at the time that any new proposal would have to offer the commission new information if the panel was to grant more land into

the city's "sphere of influence" or proposed city limits.

City officials were furious over the conditions, which they said tie their hands and make future growth all but impossible. Nevertheless, LAFCO adopted the conditions at its meeting Oct. 29, although the language was altered slightly.

In its "alternate language" the city proposes to:

- Rezone the 100-acre Landmark

property if an analysis of its industrial potential offers any hope for industrial use;

- Agree to evaluate the findings of the Pajaro Valley Futures Project and submit recommendations to the City Council. LAFCO wants the city to incorporate any reasonable recommendations; and

- Review with the county and Coastal Commission any proposals

to expand west of Highway 1.

The commission could make a decision on reconsideration Wednesday or continue discussions for up to another 70 days, McCormick said.

Wednesday's public hearing will be held at 9:30 a.m. in room 525 of the County Governmental Center, 701 Ocean St., Santa Cruz.