

SJMN SEPT 27, 1995

Don't annex farmland, says board report

WATSONVILLE ANNEXATION
BY LEE QUARNSTROM
Mercury News Staff Writer

With little discussion, Santa Cruz County supervisors Tuesday sent to the city of Watsonville a report opposing annexation of prime farmland just west of that community's city limits.

The preliminary report, sent to supervisors by their planning chief, reiterates prior board decisions aimed at preserving all top-quality agricultural land in the county. Much of the 300-plus acres on which Watsonville has cast a covetous eye contain some of the most fertile soil in the country.

In his report, Planning Director Dan Shaw noted that there is no formal annexation procedure under way. Nonetheless, Shaw's suggestion that the county make clear to Watsonville officials that its current opposition to the proposed annexation was approved unanimously by the board of supervisors.

Also, supervisors agreed with Shaw that his department should monitor proceedings of LAFCO, the Local Agency Formation Commission, so that such annexation proposals are brought to the board's attention in a timely fashion.

In directing Shaw to send a copy of his preliminary report to Watsonville City Hall, supervisors indicated they not only want to keep officials in the south county town apprised of their concerns but also to ask for a response to the planning director's study.

The proposed annexation includes farmland directly west of Watsonville's industrial section and is centered at Riverside Drive and Highway 1. The city hopes that more industrial development on the land will provide jobs for local residents.