

# Councilman offers change in annexation plan

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WATSONVILLE — The City Council's action Tuesday to prezone 216 acres of choice farm land for industry was just the first step toward that goal.

Council members will come back July 23 with a set of resolutions for the city on how to proceed.

The Riverside Drive Annexation Area is comprised of four separate tracts or 22 total parcels. The council must next decide how much of the entire prezoned area to develop into commercial and industrial property.

"There are two extremes the council could go for," Salomon said. "They can send resolutions to LAFCO (Local Agency Formation Commission) for approval for the entire 216 acres" or "they can vote parcel by parcel on all 22 parcels. Or they could go for the middle ground and decide on a portion such as that Mr. Osmer was talking about (at Tuesday's council meet-

ing)."

Councilman Dennis Osmer, who voted against the annexation, proposed a compromise late Tuesday night that one area, designated as Sub Area B, be selected for immediate development. He suggested setting a 2 to 3 year time limit for development.

"Unemployment is the rationale for annexation," Osmer said. "Now that we've got it pre-zoned, we can't sit back and wait. Let's show people what we can do in a short period of time. Let's get it done."

Councilman Lowell Hurst pointed out that Sub Area B is "probably the most prime" land of all 214 acres.

Osmer said it's also the largest and that was why he would select it for development.

Osmer's proposal was put to a vote after midnight but did not receive a majority. Hurst and Todd McFarren voted with Osmer. Mayor Betty Bobeda, Al Alcalá and Oscar

Rios voted no. A motion receiving a tie vote fails.

Alcalá protested a scaled-down annexation as well as setting a time limit on development, cautioning that development to ensure the best kinds of business for Watsonville would take time.

"It might take 10 to 15 years," he said.

"I'm hoping the negative element in its defeat was exhaustion," Osmer said in a telephone interview following the council meeting.

Osmer said he was responding to the "pressing problem of unemployment" that so many spoke to in the public hearing. He said the "degree of suspicion" his plan encountered was understandable after his opposition to the annexation, but he believes it is a rational plan and has a better chance of success considering the "huge" opposition from farmers, environmentalists and LAFCO.

Pat McCormick, LAFCO's execu-

tive director, speaking to the Council Tuesday night said the commission needs to see the overall annexation plan and then they would work with the Council.

Housing and Economic Development Director Ned Madonia told the Council that 164 businesses have expressed interest in locating in Watsonville.

"Surely we could cull out (of the 164) the kind of jobs we need," Osmer said.

Osmer said he felt clearly that the annexation was "about jobs" and that he thinks moving ahead with a proposal that LAFCO would support is key to a successful conclusion on the matter.

"If we do (go for the entire annexation), do we think it will pass LAFCO? Do we want to wait 15 years," Osmer asked.

"The Franich deal took 15 years because it was opposed by LAFCO," Osmer said. "A smaller piece has at least a slim chance."