

WATSONVILLE
Annexation

Final Franich approval

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✓ **SCOTTS VALLEY** — County commissioners gave a final stamp of approval Thursday that officially added the Franich farmland to Watsonville city limits after a contentious 13-year battle. But what should have been a routine procedure cementing the long-awaited annexation had city leaders biting their nails until the end.

Preliminary approval of the largest farmland annexation in Santa Cruz County history was given in December by the Local Agency Formation Commission. Final approval was to be given last month until a last-minute question cropped up on the size of a buffer zone required between the property and adjacent agricultural lands.

While LAFCO commissioner voted 3-2 to let the annexation proceed, they also allowed the city and county to decide what the ultimate size of the buffer will be. Commissioners Gina Koshland, Mick Routh and Ray Belgard voted in favor of the annexation; Gary Patton and Bob Garcia were not.