

✓^{Watsonville} Annexation bill advances

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SACRAMENTO — A bill that would allow the controversial 72-acre Franich property to be annexed to the city of Watsonville is on its way to the State Senate, after a move to have it reconsidered failed Monday in the Assembly.

The bill had already passed the Assembly two weeks ago when Assemblyman Sam Farr, D-Monterey, asked that it be reconsidered. Over Farr's objection, the Assembly took up the reconsideration question Monday, voting 25-38, with 41 votes needed to bring the bill back to the

Assembly for modification.

"We were short of votes," said Farr.

Farr said he tried to postpone the issue until Thursday, because many legislators were absent. However, the bill's author, Assemblyman Dan Hauser, D-Arcata, refused the delay.

The bill will proceed to the State Senate, where Hauser has promised to have it amended, according to Farr. If it is amended, it will go to a conference committee of joint legislators. If it isn't changed, then the bill could sail through to the governor's desk for his signature,

said Farr.

Property owner Tony Franich angered local environmentalists when he enlisted the aid of Hauser to carry a special bill that would allow his property to be annexed without any review by the Local Agency Formation Commission.

The annexation was approved by LAFCO in 1982 but overturned by the state Court of Appeals five years later on a technicality. Franich and his lobbyist have argued the annexation will not be given a fair hearing at LAFCO because of the influence of controlled-growth advocates.