

LAFCO will discuss city's annexation

Discussion of sphere of influence amendments, conditions to take place

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SANTA CRUZ — The city of Watsonville and its request for land to be added into its sphere of influence will be the headlining topic of discussion at the next meeting of the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) at 10 a.m. Wednesday.

LAFCO commissioners will continue their discussion on their proposed approval of the Watsonville sphere of influence amendments, which includes 94 acres of land southwest of the city limits, as well as three conditions proposed by commissioner Mardi Wormhoudt.

The conditions, which is currently the primary concern of city officials, are the following:

- The city should conduct an analysis of the industrial potential of the Landmark property (between Main Street and Harkins Slough Road) and, if potential exists, should rezone the land for industrial use. It is currently zoned as residential.

- City officials should evaluate the results of the Packard Foundation-funded Watsonville Futures Study, which is looking at the city's infill potential, and must develop a plan to implement the relevant recommendations contained within the study.

- The city must enter into an agreement with Santa Cruz County and the Coastal Commission that prohibits any future requests for sphere-of-influence additions for any lands west of Highway 1, unless the city has concurrence with both of the other parties.

At the most recent meeting of the Watsonville City Council on Oct. 21, council members and Watsonville Mayor Al Alcalá expressed deep concern regarding the conditions for fear that, if approved for implementation, the conditions will intrude on the city's power for internal planning.

"If LAFCO adopts the conditions proposed, or something similarly unacceptable, ...there is nobody to which you can appeal their decision to," warned Watsonville city planner Charles Eadie. At the council meeting, members discussed legal and legislative options they may have in case the conditions are proposed at Wednesday's meeting.

Commissioner Mardi Wormhoudt stands by her proposed conditions, saying she maintains they are "appropriate."

At the council meeting, Alcalá

said the city must be prepared to "take action" if necessary. The council agreed to request a continuance of LAFCO's discussion until its next meeting, because LAFCO commissioner and Watsonville city councilman Lowell Hurst will not be able to attend the meeting Wednesday.

LAFCO Executive Director Pat McCormick said earlier this week the commission currently does not intend to continue the discussion for another month, and that alternate Stephanie Harlan from Capitola will replace Hurst at the meeting Wednesday.

LAFCO commissioners will meet at 10 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 29 in the auditorium of the Museum of Art and History, 705 Front St. in Santa Cruz. There is parking at the River Street parking structure at River and Front streets, or limited parking in the lot south of the museum on Front Street near Soquel Avenue (three hour limit).

The agenda before LAFCO commissioners will also include continued public hearing for an annexation of Bonita Drive to Soquel Creek Water District and Seascape Uplands Reorganization to Santa Cruz County Sanitation District.