

Residents win delay to weigh annexation move

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An effort to annex part of a Freedom neighborhood to the city of Watsonville has been put on hold indefinitely to give residents there time to discuss the matter in greater detail.

At last night's City Council meeting, residents from the neighborhood nestled between Watson-

ville Community Hospital and Kmart asked the council to postpone a decision on the annexation, saying many residents just learned of the matter.

The area is surrounded by Green Valley Road, Corralitos Creek, and Marigold Avenue. In July, petitions for annexation containing signatures of 70 percent of the residents were handed over to

the city. The petition drive was headed by Gordon Kobayashi, who said annexation will benefit the area because it would get better law enforcement and fire protection. The petition was approved by the city's Planning Department this month.

Annexation could save residents of the neighborhood about \$220 a year, perhaps more, in property

and utility taxes. It would also bring \$55,800 in property and sales taxes to the city, according to city estimates.

But many residents showed up at the council meeting last night saying they had not heard of the proposed annexation until recently. Some were upset and angry.

Neighborhood resident Jim

Proost said many of his neighbors were caught off guard by the issue. He requested a postponement to give residents time to meet and get the facts. He said the time would also "take some of the emotion out of this."

No quantity or quality of facts matters to some residents. They simply didn't want to be part of Watsonville.

"I don't want to be re-zoned," said Vince Martinez.

It a feeling shared by several of his neighbors.

Herb Schwartz had a more specific reason for being against annexation. He said he didn't want his neighborhood associated with Watsonville's gang violence and crime.

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"In case you haven't noticed, Watsonville has a bad name lately," Schwartz said.

City Manager Steve Saloman said the consequences of not approving the annexation would be relatively insignificant.

"It's not like the world is going to end if this thing doesn't pass," Salomon said.

If the residents don't want to be included within the city limits, it's their choice, Salomon said. The city would save a lot of time and effort by not pursuing the matter, he said.

"There is no need for a long, arduous process in which, in the end, a lot of people end up mad," Salomon said.

In other council action, Ray Hermosillo, a Watsonville firefighter for almost 28 years, was recognized by the council last night. Hermosillo was given a certificate by Mayor Lowell Hurst and Fire Chief Gary Smith.

Hermosillo will retire Friday.

More than a dozen fellow firefighters were on hand for the presentation. Hermosillo was given a long standing ovation.