

Annexation goes ahead, despite residents' protest

By STEVE SHENDER

The city of Watsonville appears poised to take a 185,122-square foot nibble out of neighboring Freedom, despite the fact that owners of more than half the land in question want nothing to do with the city.

The city planning staff has recommended that the City Council begin annexation proceedings for a block of seven parcels located on Roache Road opposite the end of the airport's secondary runway. The annexation is one of a number of items on the agenda for a council session scheduled to start at 4 p.m. Tuesday.

Included among the parcels proposed for annexation is a 19,166-square foot lot on which Watsonville area developer David Wray is seeking to build two "clustered" residences.

The two homes Wray wants to build would share a 20-foot wide driveway with a third residence already on the parcel. Wray cannot develop the property without a sewer connection, and he cannot hook up to the sewers unless the land is annexed to the city, because Freedom is currently under a sewer moratorium.

The developer attempted to have the property and several adjoining parcels annexed to the city in 1980, but was rebuffed by council mem-

bers, who objected to the "convoluted" boundary lines of the then-proposed T-shaped annexation area. Subsequently, several other parcels were added to the area proposed for annexation, rounding it off to a trapezoidal block of land, and a new annexation request was filed with the city.

The Planning Commission received the request in December and recommended zoning for the land, in the event the city chose to annex it. Following the commission's recommendation, seven property owners, whose combined square footage (on four parcels) comprised more than half of the proposed annexation area, wrote the city to say they opposed the annexation.

Protesting property owners apparently believed their objections had been sufficient to stop the annexation move.

"I called down there to the city planning department," said Clifford Speelman, one of the property owners, today, "and they said it was dead."

Speelman and a spokesman for another of the protesting land owners said this morning the city had not advised them that the annexation proposal had been revived.

City attorney Don Haile said,

however, that the city was not required to notify affected property owners of Tuesday's agenda item, which, he said, was "strictly a resolution of intention" on the city's part. A formal protest hearing, Haile said, would be held later, should the annexation move be okayed by the county's Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO).

It appears that the annexation could go forward. Even though property owners objecting to the move own more than half of the land involved, they do not, according to figures compiled by the city, control more than half of the area's assessed valuation.

If the land Wray wants to develop is annexed to Watsonville, the city will be bound to allow him to proceed with his development, even though clustered housing of the type Wray wants to build is not allowed under the residential zoning which would be imposed on the parcel. Wray already has secured county approval for subdivision of the parcel into three lots — two for the homes he wants to build and one for the house which is already there. Under state law, if the property is annexed to the city, the city must allow his development because the county has already accepted the final map.