

Watsonville drops LAFCO lawsuit

Watsonville - annexation
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WATSONVILLE — The city of Watsonville has decided to drop its lawsuit against a local planning agency over the annexation of agricultural land west of Highway 1.

The decision was reached in closed session at Tuesday's council meeting, Mayor Dennis Osmer said.

Osmer's announcement that the city was dropping its suit against the Local Agency Formation Commission ends a potential showdown in Santa Cruz County Superior Court over the annexation issue.

The city sued LAFCO last October, challenging requirements imposed by the commission when it decided to allow Watsonville to annex just 94 acres of land at Highway 1 and Riverside Drive.

Watsonville sought to annex 219 acres of farmland to create an industrial park that city officials argue would provide badly need jobs for local residents.

In approving the lower acreage figure for annexation, LAFCO officials also imposed a number of conditions that includes studying other available sites for development.

Osmer said the city retains the right to make a legal motion to reopen the suit. But at this point, he said, the city plans to work with the agency to "meet the conditions."

"I think essentially we're at a point where LAFCO is willing to be more clear about what their intentions are," Osmer said. "And it seems that the road to annexation may not be easier, but I think it will be a little bit straighter."