

CP, Watsonville - Annexation

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# Franich annexation faces new delay

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Tony Franich's 12-year effort to annex his East Lake Avenue land to Watsonville could be delayed again.

The Local Agency Formation Commission, the agency that holds the power of approval over Franich's application, indicated yesterday a willingness to delay a scheduled vote on Dec. 8.

Commissioners said they'd postpone the vote if so requested by the Watsonville City Council, which has worked out an agreement with Franich on how the 72-acre site will be developed.

LAFCO considered voting on the

annexation in June, but decided to delay action until the city completes its General Plan.

But the General Plan won't be done by December, Charles Eadie of the city planning staff told LAFCO.

Although LAFCO is willing to delay the vote, Watsonville Mayor Oscar Rios said late yesterday he doesn't favor it.

"I'd prefer to see a decision made in December," said Rios, who voted with the council majority in approving the development plan.

Rios said he doesn't plan to bring the issue of delaying the LAFCO vote up to the City Council,

but said another council member could.

Although the General Plan hasn't been approved, it is far enough along that LAFCO members "have an understanding of where we're headed," Rios said.

Approval of the Franich application has revolved around the question of how much the city should grow and whether the Franich land, just east of East Lake Village shopping center, is the right direction to grow.

A delay could mean a different LAFCO membership making the decision. The group is made up of two county supervisors (now Ray Belgard and Gary Patton), two

members of city councils in the county (now Mick Routh, of Capitola, and Gina Koshland, of Scotts Valley) and one public member, Bob Garcia.

Belgard said he favors the annexation, and Routh appears to be leaning toward it. Patton and Garcia appear to be opposed, giving the swing vote to Koshland, who hasn't tipped her hand yet.

When Routh's term expires in May, a member of the Santa Cruz City Council will take his place. The logical appointee is Katherine Beiers, currently a LAFCO alternate.

Belgard's term also expires in

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May, but he could be reappointed to one of the two supervisors' spots on LAFCO.

There are other, though less likely, possibilities. A majority of supervisors could put different supervisors on LAFCO as early as January, but Belgard said he doesn't expect a mid-term switch.

The agreement Franich cut with the city calls for a donation of nine acres, which the city can develop for low-income housing. The nine acres will accommodate 180 to 270 housing units.

The city agrees that the rest of the property will be developed to "maximum residential densities for efficient land use" with a target of 394 to 577 housing units.