

City pays \$625,000 for land for new park

By DIANE NOLAND
STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — The Watsonville City Council has approved the purchase of a 37-acre property for future park land at 617 Buena Vista Drive. The property is being purchased for \$625,000.

Several years ago, a Parks Master Plan study concluded that Watsonville needed two more parks of at least 20 acres. The Buena Vista property was one of the areas identified as a possibility for development, said City Manager Steve Salomon.

"The property came up for sale at a good price per acre," he said. "There is not a lot of land (large enough) within the city limits and it's a lot more expensive."

The property was purchased from former resident Ethel Shafer, who has not lived on the property for some time.

"It certainly won't happen for a while," Salomon said regarding developing the property.

Plans also are being discussed for developing a park on the Fran-

ich property near the present Watsonville Hospital site. The owner is working with an architect and meeting with residents in the neighboring areas, working up plans.

Development of the Franich property is considered a much higher priority because of its location, said Pat Donohue, the city's parks and recreation director.

"All of our efforts are going to the Franich site," Donohue said. "It's more central."

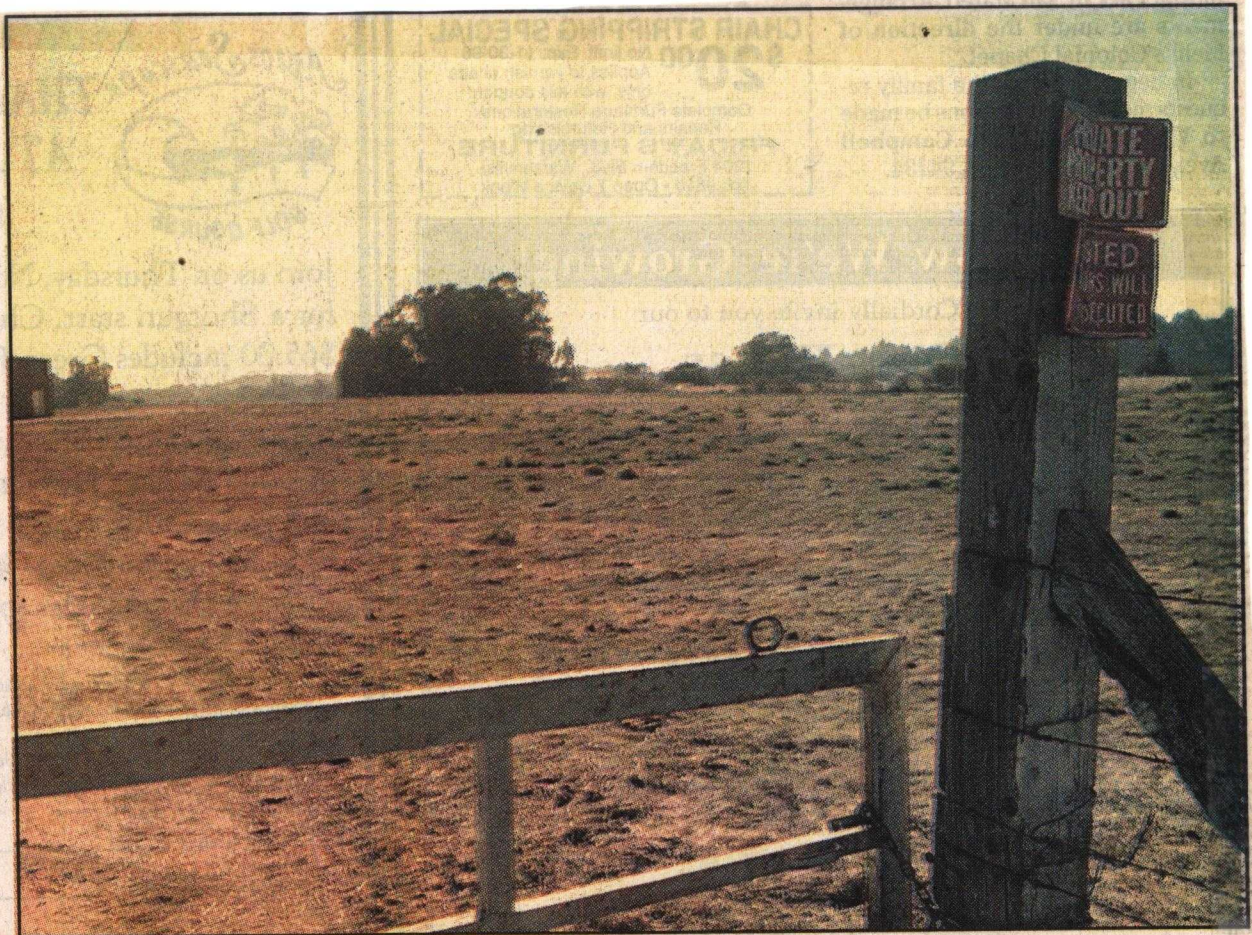
Until the Buena Vista site is scheduled for development into a park, plans are for the land to be leased out for farming. A well, which will be developed in about six months, must be available to provide enough water before it can be leased, Donohue said.

"It was a turf farm (previously). They grew grass there," she said.

Tenants have not been discussed yet, Salomon said. Adjacent land is being farmed or used for cattle grazing and the city may offer it to those farmers, he said.

If at some time the city decided the Buena Vista property was not needed for a park, it could be sold, Salomon said.

"That's certainly not what the idea is," he said.



Michael McCollum

This 37-acre tract of land along Buena Vista Drive in Freedom is the proposed site of a new Watsonville city park. The land is being purchased for \$625,000 from Ethel Shafer.

The vote to purchase the property was unanimous with Councilman Tony Campos abstaining because his company represented the seller. Campos did not take part in any discussions concerning the purchase, said City Clerk Lorraine Washington.

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REFERENCE