

✓ cf Watsonville - Annexation

# Franich offers to donate land to Watsonville

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City would receive 9 acres  
to build affordable housing

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Landowner Tony Franich has offered to give the city of Watsonville nine acres of land for affordable housing and several acres for a park in return for the city's support for his longstanding annexation attempt.

Franich owns 72 acres that used to be an apple orchard along East Lake Avenue. He has been trying to have the city annex the land, which is now in the unincorporated county, for about 10 years.

A subcommittee of city staff and three members of the council — Al Alcalá, Tony Campos and Mayor Oscar Rios — have been negotiating with Franich since the council's Jan. 5 meeting. A copy of their agreement was made available to the press this morning.

At the January meeting, the

council was poised to "certify" an environmental impact report on the proposed annexation. In doing so, the council would be saying two things: that the report adequately addressed all the negative impacts the annexation might have, and that any significant, unavoidable impacts would be outweighed by social, economic or other benefits.

The impacts the report identified as significant and unavoidable were the loss of agricultural land, exacerbation of the ground-water overdraft and growth inducement.

After certification of the report, the matter will go before the Local Agency Formation Commission, which will make the final decision on the annexation.

Some council members said they couldn't say that there were

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overriding social benefits until they knew what was going to be built on the property. Specifically, council members wanted to know how much of the housing would be affordable. The vote on the certification was delayed until some of the details could be worked out with Franich.

The agreement is scheduled for discussion at Tuesday's council meeting, and will have to be approved by the full council.

In the agreement, which is being called a statement of understanding, the city agrees to support the annexation of the entire

72.19 acres. The city also states that it agrees with Franich that the property should be developed to "maximize residential densities for efficient land use" with a target of between 394 and 577 housing units.

Franich and the city agree that upon annexation, 9 acres will be given to the city, with Franich developing roads and infrastructure. The agreement says the city will use the land for between 180 and 270 housing units. It also says the city's affordable housing ordinance, which requires 25 percent of a new development to be affordable, will not apply to the rest of the development. The city agrees to pay one-half of the cost of public improvements on the nine acres.

In another portion of the agreement, Franich agrees to donate five acres for a community park, on top of the three he is required to give under a previous agreement, and to sell the city seven more, at its fair market value, "solely under the threat of condemnation by the city."

The only condition Franich places on the donation of the five acres is that the park be named after his brother, Martin John Franich.

In a memo to the council, the subcommittee wrote that they found it necessary to support the full annexation. Alternative annexations of 19 and 36 acres have been discussed, but the subcommittee said the 36-acre plan would leave only 10 acres for housing once the school, park and agricultural buffer were put in. This would yield a maximum of 100 housing units, the committee said, and only 25 affordable units.