

City moves toward Freedom annexation

Freedom (place)
Council puts zoning in place,
proposal next goes to LAFCO

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WATSONVILLE — Annexation of a section of Freedom moved a step closer last night when the City Council agreed to "prezone" the area.

The 93-acre section incorporates Freedom Elementary School, Green Valley Village Mobile Home Park, Colonial Manor Mobile Home Park and Freedom Community United Methodist Church. In all, 429 dwellings are included in the section.

The annexation process now goes before the Local Agency Formation Commission.

At last night's City Council

meeting, no one spoke against the proposed annexation. The city did, however, receive a written protest from a resident living in the affected area.

LAFCO will now schedule public hearings on the matter. Residents living in the affected area who are opposed to the annexation can register their protests at those public meetings.

The matter could be put on the ballot in a special election if 25 percent of the registered voters in the affected area are opposed to the annexation. If 50 percent or more are opposed, the matter would be dropped.

In 1992, the Pajaro Valley school

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district proposed annexing Freedom School after an Aptos High freshman was founded murdered in the school's playground. The victim, a 14-year-old girl, was raped and beaten to death. Her body was found slumped on a bench by a couple on an early morning walk through the school grounds. The killer, an acquaintance of the victim, was sentenced to life in prison earlier this year.

School officials called for annexing the school to provide better police protection. Green Valley Village Mobile Home Park joined the school in its annexation efforts.

If annexed, the area, which has a large population of low-income residents, would receive better services, including more frequent police patrolling. Not only would residents get better services, they

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would most likely pay less for them.

City officials estimate a household living a single-family home assessed at \$150,000 would pay about \$236 less a year for services if they were part of the city. The biggest savings would come in the area of special levies. The county imposes 13 levies at an annual cost of \$292. The city would impose five levies for a total of \$84 a year.

The city has prepared a booklet with answers to most frequently asked questions about annexation involving sales taxes, assessment of property, fire protection, building codes and public works improvements.

Copies of the booklet are available at the City Clerk's office.