

# CITY OF WATSONVILLE

"Opportunity through diversity; unity through cooperation"



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June 24, 2009

The Honorable Anna M. Caballero  
28th Assembly District  
Office of Assembly Member Anna M. Caballero  
100 West Alisal Street, Suite 134  
Salinas, CA 93901

Re: SB 211 (2009 – Simitian)

Dear Assembly Member Caballero:

On June 23, 2009, the City Council of the City of Watsonville met to discuss SB 211 (2009 - Simitian), which would enable the formation of a Santa Cruz County Regional Open Space District. As presently written, the Law may have adverse impacts on the Watsonville community that may be avoided with the introduction of several amendments. Of greatest concern are the proposed governance structure to be established through this open space district and the need for clarity in establishing urban service area boundaries. The following amendments are suggested to the proposed legislation:

1. **Expand Board Governance Structure.** The proposed Board would be elected by the Supervisorial District. This would leave Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley disproportionately underrepresented on the Board. Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley would find itself outvoted on critical issues affecting our future. There is no city representative on the proposed board. Also, other important stakeholder groups could find themselves without a voice on the Board. By broadening the board composition, the law would ensure that the voices of impacted groups in South County will be considered as the District makes open space acquisitions and other decisions affecting the Watsonville community.
2. **Statutory Funding and Acquisition Requirements.** Generally, before the Districts take action, they first develop expenditure plans and acquisition programs. Currently, this is not a statutory requirement and may lead to imbalanced decision-making affecting the Pajaro Valley community.

The proposed amendment establishes a statutory citizen oversight committee, comprised of both City and stakeholder representatives, for the development and approval of expenditure plans. An affirmative approval vote by supermajority of the Oversight Committee would be required before the District Board could consider adoption.

The amendment also establishes a requirement that the District Board develop an Acquisition Program that must address all lands to be acquired regardless of funding source, and that the Acquisition Program must further receive a resolution of support by each city and the County before it is considered by the District Board. By requiring action by Cities and other interest groups before binding decisions are made by the board, this statutory amendment will ensure broader community input in open space funding and acquisition decision making.

The City Council thanks you for your continued leadership and is grateful for your assistance to the Watsonville community.

Sincerely,

Antonio Rivas, Mayor  
City of Watsonville