



CITY OF WINTER PARK

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Winter Park, Florida

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PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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May 30, 2017

To the Winter Park Mayor and Commissioners:

During the May 24th Parks & Recreation Advisory Board information was shared regarding the proposed sale of the old Bowling Alley property located on Fairbanks Avenue and adjacent to the Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Park.

This information was a surprise to the Board, and we write to you now to urge the City Commission to reopen this decision for review. It is our view that said property should be incorporated into the park. The MLK Park Master Planning process provides the perfect opportunity to determine the best usage of that land. It should not be sold.

There are various reasons we feel this way. Please allow me to enumerate them. First, when the conversation was first enjoined about this property, the point of potential acquisition was for the point of expanding parkland as well as potentially improving parking for the park. There was a joint meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board along with the CRA; this was my first actual meeting with the P&R Board, held at a meeting luncheon at the Golf Course Club House, in 2014. Though the decision was made then to not purchase the property, the entire thrust was for expanding park land, not a future purchase.

Secondly, the opportunity for the city to consolidate city-owned land around an existing park comes rarely. Even if the property were merely turned into expanded parking and beautification for the entrance to the city along Fairbanks, that would be a better use of the land than selling the property. This would be a nice first step on a long-range possibility of further acquisition on the larger land block that contains the park, the civic center and the future library.

Thirdly, at our meeting on the 24th, we were discussing field usage and the need for fields to lie at rest in order to preserve the long-term health of the turf. One aspect of that is that if the City had more fields, necessary rotation would do less to impact field usage

by the many citizens and leagues who use our fields. While the bowling alley property may not be a good location for another field, there are other potential ways in which that land could be developed by the City in order to create at least one more field in the area.

Fourth, as part of our successful decision to relocate the library to the MLK Park area, connected to the civic center, it has been the P&R Advisory Board's position that this moment provides an excellent moment to improve the overall park. There has been citizen effort for some time now in this direction, and we are happy to walk alongside these citizens in this desire. While the property in question would not necessarily diminish or eliminate the work for the park, with the work happening at the identical moment, then incorporating this new piece of land into the park comes at the perfect moment.

Lastly, as noted above, one hope in the initial discussions was that this land would give the City an excellent opportunity to beautify the entrance point to the city, immediately past the 17/92 exchange. This may be the most minor of the points, and I suppose whoever bought the land would also work to make their property/business look good at that point, however with the land under City control, I believe more specific effort could be accomplished.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our request and urging. I suppose I can surmise that part of the reason for moving to sell the property was the positive benefit to City's tax rolls. I am not unaware that the property and location are "prime real estate." Were this just "any old property," I do not believe the Board would have asked for this letter to be written. For myself, good extension of the city's tax rolls with commercial property is wise. This land, however, provides us an excellent opportunity to broaden a key park, a park that is rising even higher in the minds of the citizens with the good decision to relocate the Library here. Let us not miss this moment.

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board members want to thank the City Commission for your continued strong support of our parks and recreation department and wonderful park facilities. Please revisit the decision to sell the property, and choose a different path...the path that brings the land into the Martin Luther King Jr Park. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration

On behalf of the members of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board:

Carl E Creasman Jr, Chairperson
Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

CC: Randy Knight, City Manager
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board