

1 **Work Session - Birnam Woods Park**

2 **Current status and future uses**

3
4 **Attendees:** Mayor Romney, Council members Dave Tovey, Mark Preece, Debbie McKean, James
5 Bruhn, and James Ahlstrom (arrived at 7pm)

6
7 **Staff:** Duane Huffman, Heidi Voordeckers, Ben White, Cathy Brightwell

8
9 **Guests:** Kelly Enquist, Alan Malan, Mike Sowby, Kelley Frey, Paul Tingey, Rick Everett, Mark &
10 Connie Stanger, Lori Vanderstek, Errick Tashro

11
12 The Mayor called the work session to order at 6:35 pm and made introductions. He explained there
13 were currently no plans to make changes to the park and nothing was in the works. The meeting was
14 called to get information and have a discussion with the goal of facilitating a better product at the Park.

15
16 Dave Tovey stated there were a few residents interested in purchasing the property and several had
17 expressed concerns. Referring to the map, he pointed out the City-owned property identifying the ½
18 acre of sod, plus additional areas of weeds and wetlands. Ben White explained that drainage is difficult
19 because there was very little slope in the area. The two storm drain culverts have 3" fall between them.

20
21 The Mayor said there were a few questions the City needs to answer. Do we want to sell some of it?
22 Sell all of it? Not sell and try to come up with funds to improve it? For example, cover the ditch so it is
23 easier to maintain and decreases mosquitoes? Put in a pump? Keep the park area and sell the rest? It's
24 hard to make decisions because we don't know how much it is used by residents.

25
26 Comments were then taken from residents:

27
28 Rick Everett said his kids like having it and like to play there. He said he and his wife feel safe having
29 their kids there.

30
31 Mike Sowby suggested there wasn't a lot of value to the community because the park is not very
32 accessible to most residents. He does not believe the city should be responsible to spend additional
33 funds when it doesn't benefit the city as a whole. He pointed out safety issues, including that it is a huge
34 fire hazard with no way for fire truck to get in. Hoodlums hang out there at night. He told of a situation
35 recently when the police were called and they didn't know how to get to the park. He also said some
36 kids have been playing at the park and haven't been able to find their way back home.

37
38 Mark Stanger – How can we improve access? He likes wide open spaces.

39
40 Errick Tashro – The back of his house is 18 ft. to the fence. Weeds are a fire hazard because they aren't
41 maintained and at times they have been up over his head. He believes his house would be gone if there
42 was ever a fire. If property were available, he would love to add land to the back of his property.
43 Otherwise, it's critical that the City maintain the space. He believes there is a liability issue for the City
44 if it isn't maintained and something was to happen.

45
46 Kelley Frey – Weeds are a problem and there is no fence between the Legacy trail and the park so he
47 feels it is dangerous with people coming off the trail. In the winter, the ground west of trail is under
48 water. He would like it better if it were maintained and fenced. Being a prideful citizen, he doesn't
49 appreciate seeing it the way it is.

50
51 Mark Stanger – The new house recently built to the north of the subdivision had problems with
52 transients and they were told that transients had a right to be there. One of his biggest issues is the
53 safety aspect.

54
55 Adam Tullis – There is standing water behind his home year round. Even when grass is mowed next to
56 trail, weeds remain along the sides. He stated there are areas of weeds that have never been cut down
57 except for Mike doing it once. The ground elevation of the park area is probably 1 – 1 ½ feet below his
58 property line. He commented that just about every tree back there has died because there is no water in
59 some areas. It is very dry - all it would take would be one cigarette butt from Legacy and it would go up
60 in flames. In other areas it is flooded so it's a waste to try to grow anything.

61

1 Lori Vanderstek suggested that all the city has to maintain is mowing it once a month. She wondered if
2 the City does anything around the trail. The Mayor explained that the mowers sink when the ground is
3 too wet which usually means nothing can be mowed until the middle of the summer.

4
5 There was discussion about the original developer's plans showing a lot of grass and a larger trail. The
6 residents had been told it would be big and beautiful and they fought hard with the developer when it
7 became clear they were deviating from the initial plans. Several residents mentioned the park was
8 initially designated to be used by all 3 Birnam Woods subdivisions and they wondered if the other two
9 had been notified of the meeting. (The City only notified the residents of Birnam Woods-3.) The land
10 was originally zoned ½ acre but was approved as a PUD allowing it to be ¼ acre lots, essentially
11 rezoning the property.

12
13 There was more general discussion about what is the best use of the space. A portion was originally
14 graded as a detention pond. The ditch line gets blocked with weeds and cat tails and causes more water
15 to back up. The ground is too wet to get equipment in to mow until mid to late summer and by then the
16 weeds are very high.

17
18 The Mayor explained that when the Legacy highway and trail were built it up, a dam was formed
19 causing more water to back up. If we sold the trail area, would there be problem? Would we need to
20 fence it off? We have a few resources available such as RAP tax, which is approximately \$180 K each
21 year. Debbie McKean wondered if we could use park impact fees. The Mayor said we need to do an
22 analysis and check into other possible resources.

23
24 The Mayor asked the Council how they felt about selling the whole park. Four were opposed. There
25 was more support for selling back only the west part. There was discussion about a requirement to have
26 a certain amount of open space with subdivisions of a certain size.

27
28 Dave Tovey thought selling the west side is no brainer. The City isn't interested in expanding that far.

29
30 The Mayor asked attendees to think about different options and to give him and Council some ideas
31 about how best to proceed. Debbie McKean suggested a city clean-up or service project be scheduled to
32 help clean it up.

33
34 The work session was adjourned at 7:25 pm

35
36
37
38 
39
40 CATHY BRIGHTWELL, SECRETARY



41
42
43 
44
45 MAYOR KENNETH ROMNEY

46
47 
HEIDI VOORDECKERS, CITY RECORDER