



West Street Greenspace Preservation Coalition

P.O. Box 84, Naperville, IL 60566-0084

WSGPC.ORG

Newsletter August 27, 2007

Coalition to march in Last Fling's Labor Day Parade

The upcoming months will be crucial to our mission. The window to preserve the land between the Hobson West Ponds from extremely high density and unwanted development is a few months from closing. Even more troubling, some major and mysterious plans appear to have been hatched in a back room somewhere regarding the other greenspace properties that are at the core of our mission (much more on this later in the newsletter).

On Monday, September 3rd the Coalition will participate in the Last Fling's Labor Day Parade. Sponsored by the Naperville Jaycee Club, the parade this year will have a sports theme. In order to highlight the tremendous recreational value the Hobson West Ponds will provide to the community if protected, the Coalition will march fishing poles in hand! We may even have a boat in tow to fish from!

The parade begins on the southwest side of Naperville North High School at 10 AM. Arrive at least 15 minutes early because of possible congestion. We are position #89, line up code blue. (If no space is available at the high school, park on the east edge of the Royal Saint George (Office Max) shopping plaza and walk to the staging area). If you want to save the ponds, garden plots and West St. properties come out and march with us, or look for us along the parade route. Bring your family, friends and anyone else that wants to help support what we do. And feel free to pass the word.

We're also asking everyone who can to bring a fishing pole or 2 (no hooks please!). T-shirts have been printed and will be available for all participants. Come for a fun filled morning with other like-minded residents who believe we have something worth protecting just southwest of downtown Naperville along West St.

**Save
Open
Space**

Special note for Coalition Members

Although many of you received an e-mail notice a week or so ago concerning the Labor Day parade, many e-mails we sent bounced. Please send us your current e-mail information if it has changed so we can pass on important news as quickly as possible.

**New Logo? Let us know what
You Think**



Fall Fling Event Saturday Oct. 13th, 9-11 AM Garden Plots at our collection booth

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce the 7th annual "Fall Fling" event at the Naperville Community Garden Plots. The get together will take place Saturday October 13th starting at 9 in the morning. We will meet at our "Plant a Row for the Hungry" collection booth which is clearly visible from West St.. Please feel free to come by the garden plots at any point during the 9-11 AM time frame. This is our "Adopt a Highway" beautification effort, but no coalition member should feel obligated to do any more than enjoy fall at Naperville's beautiful Community Garden Plots. Light refreshments and good conversation will be available.

The Fall Fling was added in 2001 to our Earth Day event (which was first held at the Municipal Center in 2000). The Fall Fling has become a permanent Coalition event, celebrating the end of a successful harvest season. Highlighting the importance of the garden plots as they enter winter dormancy is an additional goal.

Please drop by on the 13th of October. The conversation is always enjoyable, the garden plots and prairie always beautiful, and the weather has cooperated (most of the time).

“Martin Mitchell” Property Review Process

(By Fred Turek, edited by George Bennett)

There has been a process under foot since the summer of '06, ostensibly to evaluate uses of the properties that came from the Martin Mitchell will in the 1930's. Our group has kept a very close eye on this process as the Caroline Martin Mitchell properties include the properties on the west side of West Street that our Coalition has endeavored to protect since our founding. However, West St. is not a line of defense that we can count on.

In December of 2006 we submitted a long statement to the City of Naperville, which resulted in the WSGPC becoming an official "stakeholder" in this process. Since that time developments have been cause for grave concern on our part and we have been shut out of the process, likely due to our mission.

The process has become extremely complex since it is attempting to incorporate the needs (and wish list objectives) of various organizations who own or operate programming on the Caroline Martin Mitchell properties. Various ideas brainstormed by some (but not all) of the stakeholders were published this July by the consulting firm of Houseal Lavigne in a document called "Preliminary Opportunities Assessment". This document is too extensive to accurately describe here but it includes ideas (if recorded correctly) generated by Edwards Hospital, Naperville Central High School (District 203), Naperville Cemetery, Naper Settlement and the Park District (the City was rather neutral). These groups comment on their needs and how they might be better met if the consultant could devise a way to rearrange the properties to create "something special". On the table and at risk are the Garden Plots, Sportsman's Park and Von Oven Scout Reservation.

The easiest to identify major flaw in the process is the consultant has misidentified the Von Oven Scout Camp as being a "Martin Mitchell" property in order to pull it into this process. In reality the Von Oven Boy and Girl Scout Reservation operates with no tax payer dollars on land donated by Emma Von Oven and with the approval of a City of Naperville ordinance enacted in the 1950's.

With respect to the widely publicized "process" the visible meetings and communications have been vague and spun leading one to suspect that this is to further some interests that were discussed in a back room somewhere (no longer smoke filled of course). The unfortunate most likely goal of this secrecy and lack of public discussion is the goal of intensive construction and high-density use of the greenspace properties that we seek to preserve.

When the Caroline Martin Mitchell process began it was a direct result of a vote of the District 203 School Board pressed by now DuPage County Board candidate Gerry Cassioppi. The process started under the innocent pretext of a District 203 Facilities Task Force recommendation to improve Naperville Central High School, said to be aging. Central may or may not need to be improved, but it does not NEED to expand its footprint south of Hillside, and even if Hillside is closed, there is certainly no NEED to bring a discussion of

eliminating additional open space into the equation, especially west of West Street. What we now know from that which is public, plus bits and pieces picked up with conversations with elected officials, is that most likely the process has always been about people eyeing up the greenspace properties for more intensive development. The Garden Plots are almost certainly targeted, and most likely others of these 3 greenspace properties are targets as well. Also, Knoch Park itself stands to shrink once again.

The next 2 paragraphs are my Letter to the Editor as Published in the Naperville Sun, Aug 15, 2007:

"So far the entire current Martin Mitchell property process has been manipulated to serve the interests of a few parties. The consultant who wants to create a money-making project for themselves and a few others that can't live within their means and covet greenspace to turn it into their preferred type of concrete, brick, steel and asphalt. This process has included excluding stakeholders (from both meetings and communications) likely to be opposed to their schemes (for example, the garden plots gardeners), holding meetings when everyday citizens can't attend them, spinning feedback that was received, and numerous other tactics.

Green space & natural areas with low intensity uses should be considered a good and final use of property, not "vacant" land for an eternal parade of such schemes. We only have these jewels because such schemes have been fought off in the past; let's make sure that we continue to do so."

Despite being the main organization out to protect these properties, and the WSGPC being the closest thing that there is to someone to represent the gardeners, and despite being identified as an official stakeholder, our coalition has been excluded from these meetings. We were not even sent a copy of the Preliminary Opportunities Assessment. Through other hats worn and connections, we will be keeping track of the next few official meetings, although we will still not have info about those deduced "back room" meetings which we think have been driving this.

If you would like to view the full 26 page Preliminary Opportunities Assessment document drop us a note and we will get it to you by US mail. The summary of the document is that opportunities exist to make the Caroline Martin Mitchell properties a "special place". The WSGPC believes that it already is.

City Council, Park District and District 203 fast track next stage of Caroline Martin Mitchell Discussion- Consultant to be paid \$46,000

During the week of August 6th, the Naperville City Council, Naperville Park District Board and Naperville Community School District 203 Board each agreed to share in the cost of developing a Master Concept Plan for the Caroline Martin-Mitchell properties. This planning effort will be completed in October. The time frame is extremely rapid due to a strong push from School District 203 as they decide how to go about renovating

Naperville Central, and whether or not to go to a referendum on February 5th, 2008.

One of the first tasks of the city planners working with the consultant is to establish the Caroline Martin Mitchell Stakeholder Oversight Committee. The City wants no more than one member from each of the following groups to participate:

Park District, School District 203, Naper Settlement, Von Oven Scout Reservation, Naperville Sportsmans Club, Naperville Cemetery Association, Edwards Hospital, and the City of Naperville.

The planning process includes two meetings with the Oversight Committee, and it is unclear if these meetings will be open to the public (no public comment will be taken if they are open). The first meeting will present preliminary concepts and then, with changes made after initial feedback, the consultant will present the first draft of the final plan at the second meeting (early October).

Notably missing from the oversight committee will be representatives from three original stakeholder groups, the Exchange Club, Green Acres Homeowners Association and our Coalition.

Obviously it remains unknown what the Master Plan (Final Plan) will suggest, but we suspect, when the plan becomes public, that many groups and individuals who have been giving the Caroline Martin Mitchell process little attention, will be in for an unpleasant surprise. Other groups may applaud.

As news becomes available we will share it directly with you and on our website, WSGPC.org.

April 17th Local Election Recap

We would like to thank all who ran for office, elected or not, who took the time to listen to our goals and who sent us position statements on the West Street properties (included in our last newsletter). We would especially like to thank Coalition member Tom O'Hale who stepped up to the call of saving the Hobson West Ponds and ran for the Park Board. Although election results were mixed, we can report that the political jurisdictions adjacent to and south of the West Street properties voted to elect Tom and also chose a different candidate for Mayor than most of Naperville. Hard work can make a difference. Additionally, since the election, we are pleased to report that City Council candidate Patricia Meyer has joined our group.

Garden Plot Update

This year 527 garden plots (more than 90% of those available) were rented and most look very productive (a bit flooded lately however). It should be pointed out that this large quantity of plots could not be relocated to the Hobson West Ponds property. There isn't room at the site, and it would be necessary to cut down the more than 120 mature trees that preserving the ponds would protect. The WSGPC is maintaining a plot with tomatoes, peppers and pumpkins thanks to the hard work of the O'Hales, Susan Kursau and others.

Mission Statement

The West Street Greenspace Preservation Coalition resolves to defend the existing green space west of and adjoining West Street against incompatible development and encourage programs and amenities that foster conservation, honor historical tradition, and preserve the area for passive use.

Website: **WSGPC.org**

Board of Directors

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Newsletter Content: George Bennett. Also Fred Turek, Wendy Mouche & Others

Newsletter Editor: Fred Turek

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Membership

Membership is open to all individuals, families and organizations who would like to support our mission (see mission statement). Dues are \$15 or your choice of a different amount (lower or higher). A membership application is available to facilitate joining. *The WSGSC is always careful to note that its viewpoints on individual topics do not necessarily reflect those of individual members and member organizations.*

Renewals

To renew, please send \$15 (or a different amount of your choice, higher or lower) for a 1 year renewal to the address in the letterhead. Yearly membership runs from May 1st to April 30th, so if you have yet to renew for 2007 please take the time to do so. If possible, include any updates on you contact information (new email address, phone # etc.) If you are uncertain of your current membership status please contact Fred Turek at tureks@ameritech.net or contact the Coalition using the information on our letterhead or website.

