

Fred's Notes on Martin Mitchell Property Study

Last modified 3/5/08

Intro & Context

While the implications of this are huge, it has been hard to obtain or provide reasonably complete information about this because it would be a daunting task to write it down. It involves 200+ Acres in the center of Naperville, a dozen organizations, dozens of agendas, a complex 11 month+ chronology, plus items that are still being kept secret from me/us/the public. My multiple hats both help and complicate the matter, being VP of 3 organizations that are closely related to this topic (West Street Greenspace Preservation Coalition, Von Oven Scout Reservation Inc., and the Green Acres homeowners association) a current (Secretary) and 19 year officer of a 4th, the Naperville Sportsman's Club, and also a 47 active-year member of the Boy Scouts, a user of Von Oven. Some information was received confidentially or second hand, and there are constraints in writing this knowing that this will probably be read by adverse persons. I decided that I don't have the time to try to keep groups that I'm involved with updated with customized summaries. Instead this is just Fred's notes on some of the key items, not directed at any particular organization. And other info is at a spot on www.wsgpc.org site as detailed later in these notes. While I believe that everything stated as facts is factual (even if the choice of adjectives etc. shows my opinions), this is written from memory and I make no promise or claim of zero errors, and suggest that you check everything out directly for yourself.

My own "biases" are towards natural greenspaces, and, especially, in relatively small preserves like these, towards trees and forests. And against putting more lights, light pollution, steel, bricks, mortar, concrete and asphalt in the place of trees. I am angry that such areas are considered by many to be "vacant" land ripe for their next scheme rather than land that is already in its highest and best use. I am also a strong supporter of Naperville's trap shooting program and use of Von Oven as a Boy Scout & Girl Scout camp. And while 2/3 of the review / planning relates to the properties on the East side of West Street, my own focus is on the properties on the West side of West Street.

And lastly, I have seen people pushing supposedly "new ideas" and "new ways of thinking" that are both actually formed 30 years ago, haven't changed with Naperville's new realities, and obsolete. Many folks had their Naperville formative years 25-40 years ago when Naperville was little and still mostly cornfields. Back then, anything that added population, density, "the bigger the better" buildings, and converted natural areas to facilities and bricks and mortar was a good thing. Now it's the 21st century. Naperville is all filled up, and its main problems are that it is choking on traffic, population and density. The above types of thinking that were correct 30 years ago are now obsolete and the opposite of what is needed and desired.

Most of this is chronological. So, you may want to look at the end to see the latest news.

Request for Information

Please send any information that you have to me at tureks@ameritech.net. If it's confidential, please indicate so, and then it will be kept confidential, and it will still be very useful to develop and understanding.

Recommended Reading for more information

We are putting everything useful that we can at www.wsgpc.org -> More Items -> Caroline Martin Mitchell Property Review. (direct link: www.wsgpc.org/martinmitchell.php)

Of course, also read the newspapers, and the City of Naperville Web site also has news and materials.

Notes, mostly Chronological

The Martin Mitchell Property includes parts of Edwards Hospital, all of Sportsman's Park, Knoch Park, the Garden Plots, parts or all of Naperville Central High School, Naper Settlement, The Barn / maintenance area, some extra greenspace by the Emerald/West intersection, and the Cemetery. Von Oven Scout Reservation was misidentified as being Martin Mitchell property presumably to try to suck it into the pot for potential damage. And the remnants of the Oswego Road Forest (currently mostly the NCHS soccer fields) have also been included in the process. And while 2/3 of the review / planning relates to the properties on the East side of West Street, my own focus is on the properties on the West side of West Street.

It appears that this started with 2 persons promoting the idea of broadening Naperville Central related discussions into pulling all Caroline Martin Mitchell properties. I believe that a main driving force of this whole process for it's first 8 months after that has been the consultant making work for themselves. Overall I view the consultant positively, but this is the reality as I see it regarding this. During the early "marketing" phase the consultant spun answers received from various organizations (and even spun the selection and wording of questions) towards this end. And I suppose that they might be doing / do this again to try to make a bigger phase 2 project for themselves. But my current guess is that they don't otherwise have other hidden agendas or biases or people controlling them, and I think that they are otherwise doing a pretty good job.

Various individuals and organizations also pushed for it or hopped on the wagon in the hopes of the results being changes favorable to their agendas.

There are various lists of organizations & "Stakeholders" in this process. Back where they were first trying to build a head of steam for this project (fall 2006) a very short list was invited to a secret meeting on this, and I don't know who was on that doubly short list. The meeting was only vaguely mentioned and only after the fact. And I think that even this mentioning was only to give this the imprimatur of this having "been discussed" in a meeting. It's possible that there is still a secret shorter list, but the shortest publicly acknowledged list is sort of "operator-stakeholders". This includes:

- Naperville School District 203
- City of Naperville
- Edwards Hospital
- The Cemetery
- Von Oven Scout Reservation
- Naperville Sportsman's Club
- Naper Settlement
- Naperville Park District

There is or was a slightly longer list of "Stakeholders" that the late 2006 questionnaire was sent to. This includes the above plus:

- West Street Greenspace Preservation Coalition
- Exchange Club (I think)

I don't remember whether or not Green Acres was included, and do not know if Hobson West was included. Several times I made the case that the following Stakeholders should be included on everything:

- Hobson West
- Green Acres Homeowners Association
- West Street Greenspace Preservation Coalition
- The Garden Plots Gardeners, included in and best represented by the WSGPC

I was told that the shorter list is for operator-stakeholders and did not include the above groups.

Early Fall 2006 Secret (until after the fact) Meeting

Back where they were first trying to build a head of steam for this project (fall 2006) a very short list was invited to a secret meeting on this, and I don't know who was on that doubly short list. The meeting was only vaguely mentioned and only after the fact. And I think that even this mentioning was only to give this the imprimatur of this having "been discussed" in a meeting.

December 2006 Request for written answers from approximately 11 stakeholder organizations

The approximately 10 questions were heavily slanted towards "let's mess with it and also give the consultant some business". Nevertheless, it was questions to a pretty broad list of heavily involved stakeholder organizations, and gave them a chance to methodically say things in writing.

The West Street Greenspace preservation coalition provided the most in-depth responses regarding the properties on the West Side of West Street. It touched on the current uses of three of the properties, which few understand the scope and magnitude of. It also touched on various agreements and legal instruments which, to varying degrees, protect these properties. (The strongest legal protection is for Von Oven. The conditions of transmittal to and acceptance by the city, and the execution *and recording of that agreement* by a permanent ordinance all define its current use for the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts.

Sportsmans also did a response.

Early 2007 Individual Meetings with 8 Operator-Stakeholders

The consultant had individual meetings with representatives of the 8 operator-stakeholder organizations. They then prepared a summary document of these which (in possibly updated form) is available as a 25 page "Preliminary Opportunities Assessment" document. This document has a few errors and a lot of spin (particularly in the final "miss-summary") but contains a huge amount of excellent background information and statements from the operator-stakeholders.

I have been able to participate in operator-stakeholder meetings and "1 person per operator-stakeholder" by being that person for the Naperville Sportsman's Club. At the operator-stakeholder meetings without the "one person" restriction, I could technically also speak on behalf of Von-Oven. But that's it. Despite those restrictions, I have nevertheless made lower key statements and provided info relative to objectives of preserving all of the properties on the West side of West Street.

Summer 2007 Meeting

The first meeting that had some (albeit limited) prior announcement was a daytime meeting with unlimited numbers of leadership persons from the operator stakeholders. Having meetings during the daytime has inherent bias against attendance by volunteer organizations. Sportsmans was not in attendance, and what I know about what happened is second-hand information from various sources. It appears that this meeting violated the open meetings act, particularly by the Park District. The agenda was ostensibly to review the results of the written surveys, but it appears that the actual purpose was to further the idea of turning this into a project. It was said that the Park District board member who has been a long time opponent of Naperville's Trap shooting operation managed to speak a great deal / "hold court" at the meeting and appears to have put forth some adverse ideas as being reasonable, and incorrect facts as being facts, and, in early 9/07 documents, the consultant miss-accepted them as such. This factually incorrect document recently resurfaced. But I think that the meeting was mostly structured to turn this into a project.

Decision to Spend \$45,000 for a preliminary plan.

A next step was three governmental bodies (The School District, Park District and the City) each deciding to give approx \$15,000 (\$45,000 total) to prepare a preliminary plan. Structurally, this will process will end with a plan which would then be considered for possible implementation by the various bodies involved. But of course, the plan would be very influential. Even if some of it were too expensive to implement, it could be used as a justification for impacting various areas.

Maneuvers to degrade or ignore Von Oven's protections

At this point, I would like to note some things heard in attempts to denigrate, dilute or misinterpret the legally protected status of Von Oven.

- There have been numerous probings that use of a different park or "the Park District is willing and able to accommodate those same needs" could be a substitute Von Oven. These people are speaking based on their agenda, not knowledge. First, as a 47 year Scouter, and one who has been running District level events for 35 years, let me say that (long story short) the suitability of such a substitution (e.g. use of a park instead of being a camp) is absolutely untrue.
- One core person on this process said on the side something like "let's see them hire a lawyer". (Fred's translation: we can win and prevent the protective deed/conditions from being followed by using taxpayer-collected dollars to outspend [on lawyers] the volunteer organization that is trying to protect Von Oven.)
- On 9/6/07 the consultant used some wording (my translation) that if (only) there a unanimous super-consensus to follow the deed / transmittal conditions / permanent ordinance / Emma Von Oven's wishes, then they would be followed. I said that this is backwards, a super-consensus (and more) would be needed to *violate* them, not needed to *follow* them.

9/6/07 Meeting

The next meeting was a 9/6/07 daytime meeting. Each operator-stakeholder was instructed to send only 1 representative. All honored this except the School District brought in their team of heavy hitters. 5 annotated map type documents were distributed. One was an annotated map of the current uses. Annotations included some incorrect "facts" and misidentification of controversial statements as facts. For example, with most of the plots rented and the PD turning away persons who want to rent extra plots that the garden plots are "underutilized". Other than that, I felt that the consultant did a good and professional job at the meeting. The other 4 were 4 plans for the whole 200+ acres. As such, they were really 40 interrelated plans for the various properties put onto 4 sheets of paper. The consultant indicated that these are for brainstorming purposes, and to feel free to mix and match in the discussions, and that, as such, these were for use only in the meeting and collected afterwards. There was mind boggling array of ideas on there. As it turns out, these will all be released to the operator-stakeholders which inevitably mean for redistribution to interested parties, and so I'll mention a few items on the east side of West street to give an idea of the scale, and then mention more regarding the West side of West Street. Ideas for the east side of West Street included a whole new high school in two different places (one in the middle of Knoch park) , a new road going from Edwards to Aurora, the Park District taking over the mental health center (and Edwards building a second one) several new parking decks. Ideas for the West Side of West Street varied from the benign to the complete destruction of Sportsman's Park, Von Oven Scout reservation and the Garden plots. I think one includes a parking deck in Garden Plots, and several include lit ball fields in the Garden Plots. One includes a new School District headquarters in the Oswego Road forest / soccer fields. When I asked why there was no "leave it alone" option listed, they said that that was an obvious implicit choice that didn't need mentioning. After my subsequent mentions of this, (especially at the 9/20 meeting) on 9/20 they agreed to specifically list this as an option.

Two things surprised me at the meetings. One was that none of the plans included totally closing Hillside as the School District's preferred plan called for. They said that there was zero support for doing so. The other was nobody wanted to jump through hoops to accommodate Rib Fest. My take on this is that, with its transition of the last few years, it has worn out its welcome. It has changed from being a Rib-Fest to being a \$12 a head concert where 60,000 people at a time from the whole Chicago area go to see bargain concerts of ever-bigger name bands. While \$12 a head entrance fee is too expensive for traditional Rib Fest attendees, it's a dirt cheap concert for 60,000 Chicago area persons to see a medium/bigger name band. And the parks and everyone who lives within a ½ mile of it pays the painful price. It used to be a great event, perfect for Naperville. They should convert it back that, from a mega-concert back to a Rib Fest and win their friends back and have it fit into this site.

At the end of the meeting, the Consultants asked that we consider this to being a brainstorming phase, and to "give the brainstorming phase process a chance" before having the public storm the walls over ideas that were merely for brainstorming.

9/20/07 Meeting

The next meeting was 9/20/07. This was for unlimited numbers of officials from the operator-stakeholder organizations. I'm guessing that 25 officials attended. For legal reasons, it was a public meeting, but not intended for public participation / comment. From the size of the audience (maybe 30 people total), and per this and the previous paragraph, it appears that most organizations just sought to have a few folks there in the audience, except that 203 sent it out to its entire "talk203" email list 2 days before the meeting.

Based on previous discussions (particularly the 9/6/07 meeting) they presented 2 plans. Just on a projector, no handouts. Again, for discussion, and saying that they can be mixed and matched. Both plans left Von Oven undamaged. Both left Naperville's trapshooting operation in place, although one put an undefined nature center in a downrange area. Both messed with the Garden plots to varying degrees. I think that the more benign one just involved conversion of parts it to storm water detention areas or ponds. The other was more severe, including putting two lit ball fields into the south end of the Garden plots.

There was a lot of discussion which, except for the below exception, seemed to be mostly head nodding and advice and questions regarding some of the unclear specifics. I spoke numerous times, including to say that the uninvited stakeholders should have at least a little extra say in the process without waiting for it to be tossed to the public at large. I did not receive a positive answer on this. The consultant intended for the "first cut" in the plans to be already-done, and intended for this meeting to further narrow the plans, and then to have another 1-person-from-each meeting October 4th, and then another big meeting October 9th. Then to finalize the preliminary plan at which time it would be available to the governing bodies and the public for usage and/ or input. But this didn't happen / went out the window. There was no orchestration / structure to move the discussion forward or to any direction. In the absence of that, the 4 comments described in the next paragraph steered the course.

The gist of the 4 comments was to see all of the 4 plans (which means, for the West side of West Street, to include the two more adverse plans.) and a few said "more plans" One comment was mostly based on procedural / process considerations. Following are notes on the other 3 comments (The items in parenthesis are my "translation" and were not directly said.)

- The Park Board member who has, long term has been against the trapshooting program and more recently has been floating ideas to kill Von Oven said he wanted time to review the plans and "come back with other ideas" (that involve the destruction of the scout camp and trapshooting program)

- One other Park board member said that she didn't see anything "exciting" (I.E. anything involving killing Von Oven or the trapshooting program) and so wanted to see other plans.
- One school board member said something similar to that.

So, the consultant decided to send out all of the plans, At this point I again suggested that "leave it alone" be explicitly and formally be included as a possible plan, and they agreed.

9/21/07 Update

The October 4th and 9th meetings have been cancelled. All of the plans will go to all of the organizations.....again, this will make them forwardable to everyone. And they are requesting feedback that represents the CONSENSUS of each organization by the end of October.

This means that it will be very important to communicate to the Park District and City Council over the next few weeks and be visibly present during their meetings, especially the Park District.

9/28/07 Transmittal

The first rev / false start of what the next (10/2/07) item did was released and quickly replaced.

10/2/07 Transmittal

In response to the 9/20/07 meeting, the consultant put out a document that includes not only the 2 plans submitted 9/20/07 but also the whole "funnel" of earlier plans and ideas that came prior to it, specifically:

- "Plan Components" A few brainstorming ideas
- "Concept Sketches" 6 First Phase Plans (labeled "Preliminary Concept Plans, each is called a sketch)
- "Initial Concept Options" 4 Plans presented to the committee in early September (also labeled Preliminary Concept Plans, except that they are not called sketches)
- "Revised Concepts" 2 Plans presented to the larger group 9/20/07 (labeled "Preliminary Concept Plan Presented to Stakeholders)

Many of the "earlier" items were much more adverse to the properties west of West Street. While those earlier items were put in merely as such, there is a high risk of these being utilized as a brand new set of ideas to pick from, especially by persons adverse to the current uses of the properties.

An additional brainstorming idea / note made is that parking should usually be parking decks. This means that "parking" in the plans is likely to mean "parking deck"

October 5 addition

On October 11th PM, and additional "October 5th" plan was sent around. This has apparently received a lot of attention in the back rooms. This smacks of the same old sneaky stuff of trying to secretly discuss and build up steam for bad ideas in back rooms before such is done in the open where it should be.

Here's a summary of these items as they relate to the properties West of West street.

Item ID	Soccer Fields / Remnants of Oswego Road Forest	Von Oven Scout Reservation	Trapshooting / Trapshooting Area	Non-Trapshooting parts of Sportsmans	Garden Plots Area
Concept Idea: Grist Mill			Eliminated		
Concept idea: Nature Center			Put into question		
Concept Idea: Seager Park / Scout Relocation		Eliminated			
Wetland Bank					Small impact
Preliminary Concept Plan Sketch A	No Change	No Change	No Change	No Change	No Change
Preliminary Concept Plan Sketch B	2/3 Remains 1/3 converted to new School District HQ and it's parking lot	Gone replaced by trails and boardwalk	Gone Converted to Park, Nature Center & Zoo	Converted to Park, Nature Center & Zoo	A portion of plots remain. 3 Ball fields (on South end) , Boardwalk added to wetlands an additional parking lot added.
Preliminary Concept Plan Sketch C	2/3 Remains 1/3 converted to new School District HQ and it's parking lot (larger version than Sketch B)	Gone A portion taken over by School District HQ parking lot. The rest is vague, but looks like woods	Gone Converted to Park, Nature Center & Zoo	Converted to Park, Nature Center & Zoo	Claims the "Garden Plots Remain" But a large chunk is converted to NPD rec center and its parking lot. Wetlands converted to "Regional (water) Detention"
Preliminary Concept Plan Sketch D	No Change	No Change	Intended as "No Change" except Nature Center placed in shotfall area.	Add Nature Center and it's parking lot	Plots Gone Replaced by large parking lot, ball fields, and soccer fields. Wetlands converted to "Regional (water) Detention"
Preliminary Concept Plan Sketch E	Part of "Expanded Soccer Fields"	Gone Replaced by more soccer fields and parking lot	Gone Replaced by New Stadium, Ball Fields & Tennis Courts	Gone Replaced by New Stadium, Ball Fields & Tennis Courts & Parking Deck	Gone. Replaced by new High School and Parking Deck Wetlands converted to "Regional (water) Detention"

Item ID	Soccer Fields / Remnants of Oswego Road Forest	Von Oven Scout Reservation	Trapshooting / Trapshooting Area	Non-Trapshooting parts of Sportsmans	Garden Plots Area
Preliminary Concept Plan Sketch F	Gone Replaced by Rec Center & it's parking lot	Gone Replaced by woods/ trails	Gone Replaced by Nature Center, Zoo and woods	Replaced by Nature Center, Zoo and woods	Supposedly Plots remain, but really one ½ of them do. Expand current parking, and add a second parking lot or deck. Add 3 ball fields Wetlands converted to "Regional (water) Detention"
Preliminary Concept Plan A	No Change	No Change	No Change	No Change	No Change
Preliminary Concept Plan B	1/3 taken over by new School district HQ and it's parking lot	Gone Forest and trails	Gone Replaced by Nature Center, petting zoo and trails	Nature Center, petting zoo and trails	Plots reduced Expansion of parking lot and addition of second parking lot, playground and 3 ball fields
Preliminary Concept Plan C	1/3 taken over by new School district HQ and it's parking lot	Supposedly stays in reduced reconfigured form. Changes would probably be fatal.	Remains, but petting zoo is in a (downrange) place that would be adverse to it.	Petting Zoo, Nature Center and a portion of a rec center added	Reconfigured / reduced plots remain. Rec center and expanded parking added Wetlands (and then some) converted to very large "Regional (water) Detention"
Preliminary Concept Plan D	No Change	No Change	Remains , but nature center could be in a (downrange) place that would be adverse to it	Add Nature Center and Nature Center Parking	Plots gone. Expansion of parking, add 3 ball fields, add 2 soccer fields, Wetlands and more converted to very large detention area.
Preliminary Concept Plan Presented to Stakeholders A	No Change	No Change	No Change	No Change	No Change except wetlands converted to detention
Preliminary Concept Plan Presented to Stakeholders B	No Change except a small amount taken over by moved Oswego Road	No Change	No Change	Existing NPD Off-season storage shed expanded / converted into large maintenance facility	Small amount of plots remain. Most replaced by 4 new ball fields, 1 new soccer field and expanded parking.

Item ID	Soccer Fields / Remnants of Oswego Road Forest	Von Oven Scout Reservation	Trapshooting / Trapshooting Area	Non-Trapshooting parts of Sportsmans	Garden Plots Area
Additional "October 5 th " plan	Mostly gone. Replaced by detention pond, moved Oswego road, "festival grounds" and parking lot.	Gone. Replaced by "festival grounds" and parking lot.	Gone. Replaced by festival grounds" and parking lot.	Gone. Replaced by "festival grounds" and parking lot.	Gone. Replaced by detention pond, "festival grounds", 4 ballfields, soccer field and parking lot.
Additional "October 12 th " Plan (from memory, has not been routed)	No Change	No Change	No Change	No Change	Substantially reduced. Ball fields and detention pond added.

October 11th Park Board Meeting

During the beginning of the Park Board meeting, they made a last minute addition of "Discussion of CMM issues" to their agenda. I spoke on this topic in the general comments-from-the-public section. The Park Board completed all public agenda items and then adjourned into executive (secret) session. Several of us waited about 2 hours for them to come out of this session. When they came out of the session, they dropped the CMM item and then adjourned.

October 12th Naperville Sun

It speaks of the "October 5th" plan as sort of the new main plan. This is quite astounding for something that has never even been discussed in public session by any of the governmental bodies. They said that the Park District said that they discussed it at their October 11th meeting. It was NOT discussed in any public portion of the October 11th meeting, and was presumably not illegally discussed in their executive session.

From the article, it appears that one Park Board Member and One School Board member have been pushing the "October 5th" plan.

October 12th Plan

A newer plan that (compared to the October 5th plan that was in the October 12th Naperville Sun) vastly reduces the destruction on the West side of west street (but still damages the garden plots) came out, also from the smoky back rooms, and not from the main process.

October 17th City Council Meeting

The October 12th plan was given the most prominence. I did not plan to speak but got drafted and gave some unprepared comments. My heaviest focus was saying that use of a park is NOT a substitute for a dedicated Scout camp. I gave my a few credentials (47 year Scout, 35 years running District level outdoor programs, actively involved with and VP of Von Oven) to give this comment some weight. A tactic / pipe dream of those looking to kill Von Oven is to say that they'll take care of the needs of the Scouts elsewhere (e.g. at a park).

This meeting went reasonably well with Respect to Von Oven and Sportsman's Park, although it was clear that everything is up for grabs, Garden plots are clearly in the crosshairs. If there is a new or

greatly expanded high school, all of their plans call for putting ball fields into a part or all of Garden Plots.

General Comments on Included and Excluded Stakeholders (written 11/19/07)

First a background point, many have mistakenly assumed that the operator-stakeholder meeting process has been a decisionmaking process, I.E. that it IS the smoky back room. In reality, the decisionmaking aspect of this process started out as "ignored" and then transitioned to "shut down". The intent was that it was for brainstorming and then narrowing to a couple of plans for later discussion purposes. In reality, any decisionmaking done was rendered pointless by back-room dealings and also by lack of any plan to receive input during the September 20th meeting. As a result, at the 9/20 meeting, 4 people (3 of them ill-intentioned) dominated the other 30 that were present and had all earlier work of the group thrown out. And after that, the smoky back rooms dominated the process. An obnoxious plan (from completely outside of the process) pushed by 2 people in back rooms was the one that ended up in the newspaper with the imprimatur of being a main current plan. After than the meetings were cancelled and delayed, and then the final meeting was just (an excellent) discussion but with no process to do anything such as review or create plans.

As a second background point, the goal should be an organized, public process which obtains input from those affected, with some way to give a little extra involvement to those who are most affected. As an example of the latter, although they would both have input, one person who might lose their ability to enjoy their property and \$100,000 of their property value due to a lit ballfield going in next to their house would have a little more consultation than a person who lives 5 miles away and would like for there to be more ball fields. Or, two of those five-mile-away people wouldn't automatically override the one person who would be next to it.

That said, here are the largest scale sincere complaints:

1. Exclusion of various intensely involved stakeholders from the process. The two adjacent subdivisions, the gardeners, and the West Street Greenspace preservation coalition come to mind. (One could add Rib Fest/ Exchange Club except that they have made up for that 5 times over by being overly influential in the smoky back rooms.) There is no fix in sight on this....they were all totally excluded, and it looks like they will be given no place in the process other than being members of the public at large (see above).
2. Seeing an obnoxious plan show up in the newspaper that has never had public input raised the concern that things are getting far along prior to the public input phase.
3. Seeing an obnoxious plan show up in the newspaper that has never had public input raised concerns too much is happening in smoky back rooms. (including some of them mistakenly thinking that the operator-stakeholder meetings were influential smoky back rooms.)

With the lack of any process for #1, and the smoky back rooms still dominating the overall process, current plans only address one (#2) of the three problems.

November 6th Final receipt of written comments from operator-stakeholders

More on this later.

November 7th (Probably final) meeting of the representatives of the operator stakeholder groups. (one per organization only)

This was a nice meeting with nice, informative discussions. Nothing more, nothing less. There was no process to review or deal with any plans. More on this later.

November 8th Park Board Meeting

The Park Board continued their unbroken streak of not discussing this huge topic in public meetings. (Except I'm told they once discussed it at a workshop which is technically a public meeting). They are (in terms of owned and leased acreage) the largest player in this, and one commissioner was main smoky-room pusher of the obnoxious plan that was in the paper, and so this must certainly be on their radar screen for discussions.

On a good note, it looks like things are going a good way on getting the Hobson West Pond property in question bought.

November 10th Forum Sponsored by League of Women Voters and Naperville Area Homeowners Confederation

With the Naperville League of Women Voters representing a small group from one end of the political spectrum, and also a group that has been working for the destruction of Naperville's trapshooting operation, there are certainly questions about objectivity of the hosting. While I have respect for them in several areas, and high hopes of them moving away from that one end of the spectrum, I have to tell it straight regarding the current situation. The Naperville Area Homeowners Confederation is more mainstream, and hopefully did / will have more than a token involvement.

I would call the progression of this meeting bad to good to question mark. The only "speech time" was given to a person who is on the "let's change it" side of the issue, and they told what I considered to be an irrelevant story / analogy (in a "I know better than you" tone) about a person who was doing something really pointless and stupid (throwing a part of every roast away) for their whole life for no reason other than that they (and the persons that they learned from) always did it that way. I respect such as legitimate (and possibly effective) advocacy speech fit for voluntary listeners, (or maybe even involuntary listeners if reduced to a 3 minute public comment) but my above negative feelings relate to it being a longer and the only speech at what was billed as a public input session.

Next came what I thought was an excellent process for the specific / specialized mission-of-the moment which was to gather, summarize and present a lot of opinions and ideas in a limited time frame. It was run in a very structured way with a strong hand by a facilitator. While such tactics are rightfully suspect, in this case I think that they worked well, and in an unbiased manner. Everyone put sticky notes on the walls with concerns and ideas. Then everyone broke into 4 groups which combined and summarized them. I may have missed one, but by far the most prevalent thoughts were:

- Preservation of green spaces and natural areas (by far #1)
- Importance of quality education. Input in this area was widely divided on whether a focus on buildings was a plus or minus to this goal, and what to do regarding the high school (new building vs. rebuild existing building vs. just do maintenance.
- Concerns about the CMM review process, and that it be done well with input etc.
- Transportation, with the main theme being of not creating more dense traffic.

The question mark was a comment that someone from amongst the sponsoring organizations will be summarizing the results, raising the objectivity questions from the start of this section.

District 203's Decision, Resultant Pause, and Passage or Referendum

District 203 officially decided that the preferred option is a significant rebuild/ rework on the current site, and to ask for additional funds in a (2/5/08) referendum to pay for a portion of it. City staff to pause the CMM process until after the 2/5/08 referendum. In the district 203 "FAQ's" written to build support for the referendum, 203 made many significant statements, including:

Buildings: Will the proposed plans for Central affect the Boy Scouts (Von Oven Park [sic]) or the Sportsman's Club? These areas will not be impacted by the proposed renovations. There was strong community interest in leaving these areas intact.

The referendum passed.

February 25th 2020 Plan Draft #1.1 Released

With the lead writer being yours truly, Draft #1.1 is released and submitted / sent to 9 of the listed 15 stakeholder groups, with the others soon to follow as contact points are identified and the submittal work is completed. All initial feedback was positive which of course, is very preliminary at this point.

February 26th Meeting

City Staff (and particularly the 2 core persons involved) organized this meeting in order for the Park District, the City, 203 and Naper Settlement to discuss plans and elicit feedback. Aside from a noteworthy omission by one of them in the general and individual sessions, I would give them an A+ for an effort to organize and present an objective meeting which got a lot of information out and elicited feedback. I'd give it a B+ for execution, and we'll have to see the accuracy and objectivity of the summary before rating the end results. I would guess that 100 people attended.

The main body of the meeting consisted of visitors rotating through 4 areas, each of which gave an approximately 20 presentation and request for feedback. This was preceded by an introduction / presentation to the entire group, and capped off by a brief closing to the entire group.

The persons who have been influential pushing more destructive plans in "back rooms" were mostly absent from this meeting.

While the meeting was, as a whole, run very objectively, and really did elicit feedback, I have some concerns that prevalent feedback will not get identified as such. This is due to two reasons. The city staff that organized this event were only present (i.e. hearing feedback) in 2 of the 4 sessions. The second relates to the fact that I didn't see much of a process in place to record the prevalence of feedback. From the sessions I saw, the overwhelming feedback was to preserve open spaces and natural areas, yet the process merely listed comment points. As an example, if, regarding properties on the West Street, 50 people said to "preserve them", two persons said "make it into a parking lot" and three said "make it into a ballfield", then the moderator's summary of the feedback would tend to be to just list those three items with no indication of how many people said each.

In terms of the "gist of the gist" what stands out to me is announcements or floating trial balloons on potentially controversial plans where I saw this meeting as the first announcement to the general public that the governing bodies were seriously considering them. There were comparatively few of these, I marked those that I noted with delta signs: Δ = non-public discussions seem to be already well in progress. Δ = Possibly was just floating the idea.

Traffic / Transportation Section

A low key session that seemed to be ¼ presentation and ¾ asking for general comments, suggestions and feedback.

Δ Rerouting Osler Drive into Emerald (which, either way, is planned to have a stoplight where it hits West street.). This basically would route the traffic of the West entrance of the Edwards / Mental Health Center through Emerald rather than going directly to West Street.

Δ Angling (rerouting) Oswego road across what is now the soccer fields to join to Hillside

Garden Plots & Knoch Park Session

▲ Converting the northern half (about 60% of the current plots) of the Garden Plots to practice fields. This being the first announcement of what were apparently well-in-progress non-public discussions between NPD and 203, and a combined announcement / feedback session (all in 20 minutes), this session was far too short and chaotic to serve it's purpose, and so there was not time to ask questions about or get answers on important details. The Park District has had a history of making policies and changes that would tend to reduce garden plots usage, and then even when usage remains high they characterize them as "underutilized", and this claim was continued during the presentation. Of the approx 350 eliminated plots, about 100 would be move elsewhere within the Garden Plots property, and they indicated that the others would be replaced by new ones elsewhere in the city. The session was run by a person from the Park District that I have a lot of respect for in all areas ranging from competence to objectivity. But this session was just too short to either fully communicate or get feedback. If this has been seriously discussed, it should have already been discussed in open session at a Park Board meeting.

Von Oven Scout Camp and Sportsman's Park

General discussion of and feedback regarding the properties.

The feedback in the session that I was in was overwhelmingly in favor of preservation of the properties as natural areas and current uses. Probably a distant second was the folks that feel that the top priority should be more ballfields and more parking for ballfields. And a distant third was 2-3 long term opponents of Naperville's trapshooting operation with questions / comments towards that end. There were a lot of questions and answers that indicated confusion about Sportsman's Park. For example, few knew that Naperville's trapshooting is a public (Park District) program and utilizes less than ½ of Sportsman's Park, or what the other ½ of the property offers.

There was a noteworthy omission regarding Von Oven. The first conveyance of this land was a ½ undivided interest by CMM. The second conveyance was a ½ undivided interest by Emma Von Oven with the Scout use being a condition of the conveyance, and agreement by the city, and the subject of a permanent city ordinance. In the "where there's smoke there's fire" category, I found the mentioning of the ½ CMM transfer and failure to mention the Emma Von Oven transfer, conditions, agreement and ordinance to be significant.

I found this to be a very objective session which sought to inform and get feedback rather than push any agenda.

Naperville Central High School and Naper Settlement

The hugest plans of all were in this session, but such plans within that "envelope" were pretty well expected. Major renovation / rebuild of Naperville Central and many major changes on the "border" area of these two properties. Expansion of Naper Settlement south into what is now Porter St. and parking lots.

Naper settlement wasn't going to mention that they are going into the 200-300 person banquet business until I asked. I have a lot of respect for these folks and just asked that they watch / scrutinize such things closely to see if they are truly consistent with their mission and run them to be so.

I heard 2nd hand that 203 said that construction equipment etc. will be stored on the Soccer Fields / Oswego Road Forest remnants.

There were many comments in this session. I think that everyone who spoke on the school topic indicated strong support for education. Differences in opinion between attendees were mostly in how best to do that. Comments regarding "buildings don't educate" were less in predominance with the course being already chosen in that area. The main split at the meeting was between:

- the priority of accommodating more students wanting to take their cars to school vs.. nudging them into the bus system and making the bus system viable even those with after-school programs.
- to what degree athletics fields should be a high or secondary priority of schools and whether they are core vs. ancillary for education.

What Do I Suggest that you do?

Send an email to me at tureks@ameritech.net with your email address saying that you want to receive email notices regarding specific calls to action and information.

Keep up to date by watching www.wsgpc.org -> more items -> Caroline Martin Mitchell Property Review (www.wsgpc.org/martinmitchell.php)

On a low key, ongoing basis (over the next several months) contact Naperville City Council Members, the City Manager (even if outgoing) Naperville Park District Commissioners, District 203 School Board members and the District 203 Superintendent and urge them (with your own specifics) to preserve the properties and uses on the West Side of West Street.

If you would like to make a more general statement about preserving greenspace and lower density in Naperville, go to www.wsgpc.org and sign in on the survey/petition. We said that it won't be public until we get at least 1000 people on it, so please participate!