

Carl,

Thank you for your service as Chair of the Parks board. I am available to meet with you and other members of the Parks board, individually or at a public meeting, should you or any board member desire. One of the big challenges in serving on the commission is effectively communicating the facts and debating the tradeoffs as we make policy decisions. Your letter (attached) is appreciated as it serves as a starting point for in depth communication on the matter of the bowling alley property. I note at the outset that the thought of receiving tax dollars from commercial development of the bowling alley property has never entered my mind until you mentioned it in your letter. That is not an issue I care about.

I embrace the need for more and better park space in Winter Park. I also support more pedestrian/bicycle friendly environments. I led the effort to expand and greatly improve the initial plan to "right size" Denning Drive, a project that will start shortly and hopefully prove to be a model for similar improvements throughout the city.

The vote to put the bowling alley up for sale is not the same as voting to sell the property. We will have to see what limitations the commission agrees to place on the zoning and uses of the property, if any, and then see what kind of offers we get.

The bowling alley property was purchased from Rollins in 2016 based on being able to provide greater right of way on Fairbanks and, potentially, finding a use as incremental park space. In other words, the purchase decision was opportunistic, not strategic.

I am all for making material commitments to new parks and improved parks, and I believe such decisions must be strategic. Our community will not realize value by purchasing land that happens to be for sale just to satisfy a general desire for more park space.

I encourage those calling to retain the bowling alley property as MLK park expansion to visit the site and offer workable ideas on how to effectively utilize it as park expansion. My current judgment is that the almost \$3,000,000 of citizen resources paid for the bowling alley property can better serve our 30,000 residents if applied to park and other city improvements, and to build back our city reserves. This judgment is based on the following:

- Any plan to create a third multi-use field at MLK requires that the Rollins softball stadium be moved outside MLK park. While Rollins may be willing to do this, the cost of doing so will fall mostly, if not all, on the city. By contract, Rollins has no obligation to move the field (their rights to the field are perpetual unless they and the city reach an alternative agreement).
- The bowling alley property is not needed to create a third multi-use field should the Rollins softball stadium be moved.
- Some have suggested that having three artificial turf regulation fields would attract tournaments. I am not convinced frequent sports tournament activity would be a positive for Winter Park.
- At the price/square foot paid for the bowling alley property, the remaining properties abutting MLK park along Fairbanks (about 3.6 acres including the sink hole) would require about \$5,000,000 to acquire IF THEY WERE FOR SALE AT THAT PRICE TODAY. As our city is not in the business of condemning land for public use, getting control of this additional property is improbable at best. Further, the cost of incorporating this land into MLK park is likely several million dollars on top of the purchase price, and the land is sufficient for adding only one regulation soccer field with some parking, after paying to reconfigure existing fields. One question I ask when considering options is whether the voters would approve a referendum at this level of spending (\$10,000,000?) for this level of benefit. I think not, and as such find it difficult to vote to impose any portion of such costs on our residents with so little clear benefit. With that said, my vote to agree to any sales contract on the bowling alley property will be based on whether we can receive fair value, not on selling it for the sake of selling it.
- City reserves are critical to our long term security. The city had to spend \$18,000,000 responding to and restoring city assets to recover from the 2004 hurricanes. These funds were not fully recouped from FEMA for 10 years. City policy is to have general fund cash reserves equaling 30% of annual general fund spending to provide for such contingencies. We need \$15,000,000 in cash to meet this goal and the 2017 budget estimates a reserve balance of about \$10,000,000 at year end (September 30). It is my judgment that the long term interests of all our citizens are best served by acquiring new park land after we have reached our reserve goal, with one exception. I am in favor of making park investments from reserves where the opportunity is truly strategic and offers clear long term benefits. The bowling alley property does not meet this standard.

I deeply respect and support calls for more park land, and green space in general, and continue to work with anyone and

everyone sharing this objective. When a piece of land becomes available whose potential truly adds value to our park/green spaces at a justifiable price I will promote its acquisition and improvement. In the absence of compelling civic uses for the bowling alley property, I ask for your patience as we pursue a sale, and I ask for your help in prioritizing a portion of the expected proceeds for park improvements.

Sincerely, Pete Weldon



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