

Letters to the Editor, Woodinville Weekly, November 28, 2012

Thank you for your coverage of the Snohomish County Parks Advisory Board action on the Wellington Hills County Park Master Plan. I attended their November 12 meeting in support of Neighbors to Save Wellington Park, (NSWP) our newly-formed association of local citizens in both King and Snohomish counties who support Wellington Park and are utterly opposed to the massive regional sports complex that Snohomish County Parks Department has advocated for this site.

As the minutes of the November 12 meeting show, statements from the audience reaffirmed points that NSWP have been trying to bring to the public discussion ever since we were first informed of the draft plan in May 2012.

Mike O Grady, Woodinville excerpted comments - stated neighbors were not contacted in advance of May 2012 public meeting.

“This is a government run industrial sports complex. A private company would never be allowed to drop a commercial sports complex in a residential neighborhood

Larry Nelson, Woodinville, excerpted comments - steep road, rarely plowed. We don't want to be located across from the new fields. A shame that this money is being spent on this project and should be used instead by the county sheriff's office, etc.

Todd Bailey, Woodinville, representing Neighbors to Save Wellington Park, excerpted comments - zoned rural. Concerns - commercial development located in a rural neighborhood.

This was not part of the county park comp plan in 2007. We were not contacted regarding input as to amenities and features of the property. We are asking you to downsize. Concerns regarding traffic and safety. Property value is projected to decline by experts. Suggested operating hours of the park will leave only eight hours for sleeping.

Ed Stevenson, Woodinville, excerpted comments - largest private property owner adjacent to park. Concerns regarding cycling/bmx complex (public-private partnership).

Major business taking up a lot of square footage. Please get assistance to assess risk vs. benefits of this enterprise that is not zoned as such.” Loss of green area.

Katrina Stewart, Woodinville, excerpted comments - this park is for the purpose

of generating revenue. It does not benefit the neighborhood. It doesn't make sense. What is the plan for traffic? Only a 2-lane road. Not passable during snow.

No one at the meeting spoke in favor of the plan. Nonetheless, Parks Director Tom Teigen pressed forward with arguments he has been making since May 2013 at the start of the so-called public involvement plan:

Parks Advisory Board potential action on the Wellington Hills County Park Master Plan - Tom thanked audience for coming, and made other comments related to what the Brightwater Mitigation Agreement called for (40 + acre park for active recreation) with discussions and meetings held as far back as 2005 detailing the need for multipurpose, synthetic, lit athletic fields.

Tom stated: If approved by Board today, plan still needs to be approved and reviewed through the SEPA process (approx. mid Feb 2013), etc., before moving forward. Important: there will still be opportunity to make comments and appeals before plan is finalized and sent to Council for final approval. Motion to approve. Seconded. One opposed. Nine affirmative. Motion passed. • More comments from the audience.”

The intensity of the “more comments” referenced but not included in the minutes would show just how divisive this issue has become. The Parks Department is claiming it is just meeting contractual obligations imposed by the Brightwater Mitigation Agreement and that there is a local public demand for a sports-complex at Wellington, a claim that is as yet undocumented.

Moreover, Parks continues to ignore minimize or defer to the future the following substantive points:

- 1) That its interpretation of the Brightwater Mitigation Agreement may be flawed. The agreement certainly wouldn't require Snohomish County to ignore the needs of its own Comprehensive Plan or the requirements of the Growth Management Act;
- 2) That there has been no public needs assessment for a regional sports facility in south Snohomish County. In fact, some of the proposed uses may be illegal outside of an urban growth boundary. Wellington is a zoned rural area;
- 3) That Wellington may not be suitable for such a facility. Consider 700 parking spaces to service two major recreational draws to its traffic “chokepoints” — Route 9 on the west and 156th (Bostian Road) to the east of 240th, the only access road into and out of the park;
- 4) That alternative uses of the park, such as continuation of an active 82-year-old golf course, had not been seriously considered.

5) That the changes made to the draft plan because of interactions with the neighboring communities have been little more than a tweaking of some features, appreciated but minimal at best.

Meanwhile, NSWP has seen the purchase of additional acreage to the park, the placement of fences (albeit attractive) along both sides of 240th and a stream of surveyors who represent a harbinger of the massive clearing and grading to come.

To learn more, and to see an outstanding photographic record, check out the following sites:

- <http://iv92588.typepad.com/blog/>
- <http://neighbors to savewellingtonpark.blogspot.com>.

Thank you for your attention and support. We think the future well-being of our Wellington Hills communities is at stake!

T.P.