

Agenda Report

To: Chuck Ahl, Acting City Manager
From: John Nephew, Councilmember
Date: November 3, 2008
Re: Discussion of an Ordinance for the Protection of City Open Space

Recently some residents have written to the city council to express concerns about the preservation of lands purchased with the open space referendum monies. One couple wrote, "We hope that city hall passes a motion that the open space preserves cannot be touched by any council without the vote of the citizens of Maplewood."

Another resident wrote with a similar thought, saying:

Please consider passing a motion that the OPEN SPACES CAN ONLY BE SOLD OR DEVELOPED BY THE VOTE OF THE CITIZENS.

That is the only fair thing to do. WE own the Open Spaces, not Maplewood. Maplewood bought them with the citizens money - it is only right that they are the ones to decide what should happen to them, NOT FUTURE COUNCILS.

It seems to me that this is a reasonable suggestion. We could draft an ordinance that would prohibit the city from selling or developing any Neighborhood Preserve without first obtaining the approval of a majority of voters on a referendum question.

Combined with the comprehensive plan (which will require a 4-vote supermajority in order to approve any change in the land use designation on Neighborhood Preserves), such an ordinance would be a simple and inexpensive way to strengthen the safeguards on our city's Neighborhood Preserves.

Recommendation

No action is necessary at this time. I want to have this item on the agenda to give the council as a body an opportunity to discuss and react to this suggestion from our residents, and see if we have the consensus that would justify work on such an ordinance by our staff and the Parks Commission, for future council action.