

Peltz-MDOT: Different groups, different dreams

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By Joanne Mallazewski
staff writer

MARK DAVIS wants Farmington Hills to buy more vacant land before building the proposed seven new ballfields on the controversial 72-acre Peltz-MDOT property.

"They say their number one priority is to buy more land. Let them get the additional land and then make decisions of where to put ballfields based on that," said Davis, president of the Quaker Valley Farms Homeowners Association.

Davis and many other residents in Quaker Valley and throughout the city have for months argued the need to preserve as much as possible, if not all, of the city-owned vacant land south of I-696, west of Farmington Road, and north of Quaker Valley.

Though divided at first, the so-called birdwatchers and jocks (athletic fields advocates) have met a couple times to clarify their positions. Davis said he acknowledges the need for more ballfields in the city.

But his opposition to seven new fields on Peltz-MDOT is a matter of economics. And he plans to campaign against any parks and recreation millage proposal if proposed plans do not change.

IN A PROPOSED five-year action plan — distributed to city officials and interested residents more than a week ago — the Parks and Recreation Commission recommended construction of four ballfields and three soccer fields, gravel roads, hiking trails, picnic area and parking on Peltz-MDOT. The estimated cost is \$1.6 million with parks and recreation millage revenues and grants as financing sources.

The five-year action plan is a component of the proposed state-required parks and recreation master plan. A public hearing on the proposed master plan is scheduled before the Farmington Hills Planning Commission at 7:30 tonight in city council chambers.

Davis believes costs for a proposed road into Peltz-MDOT and ballfields are too high, with estimates for the road and ballbuilding for the fields to range from \$800,000-\$1.2 million.

"I strongly recommend that the number of new athletic fields not be tied to location in the millage plan. I will join others in the city who will campaign against the (proposed parks and recreation) millage if it includes the present transitional park with seven athletic fields at Peltz-MDOT," Davis said.

REPRESENTATIVES of the baseball-softball and soccer leagues say they need more fields.

Ideally, the 1,100-1,200 kids — 85 teams in 1990 — who participate in the South Farmington Baseball League need another five or six fields in addition to the existing 19 fields on which they play, said commissioner Roxanne Fitzpatrick.

Because there is a desperate need for fields Fitzpatrick wouldn't mind seeing some built on Peltz-MDOT. "We need fields now. If they put fields on Peltz-MDOT, realistically, that's 3-4 years down the road. What are we supposed to do?"

Ray DelCorvo of the North Farmington-West Bloomfield baseball or-



A natural mud waterfall on the Peltz-MDOT land created a lot of debate among the people who toured the Farmington Hills-owned property. "Any species that can survive here won't if the trees come down," Farmington Hills resident Joe Dorek said.

ganization was unavailable for comment.

Joe Miller of the Farmington Soccer Club is certain the more than 500 kids who participate need at least eight more fields immediately in addition to the 10 they now use. The eight fields are needed to reduce the overloaded field schedule and would allow fields — that get torn up during play — to be rotated. For the future another four-to-six fields are needed.

Like Fitzpatrick, Miller believes the city's number one priority of buying more land in the city must become a reality. Miller too believes fields must be built on Peltz-MDOT though that wouldn't fulfill all the soccer needs.

"It allows more of a community park so families can gather for the games," Miller said. "Other communities have that."

The action plan, which recommends land acquisition and develop-

ment of smaller parcels for youth athletics, also contains recommendations for other parks and recreation needs, including Heritage Park.

AFTER THE planning commission recommends either approval or denial of the proposed master plan tonight, the city council will review it and schedule a public hearing.

The next step then would be to

look at a millage plan, special services director Dan Potter said. A millage plan might not address all the things in the action plan.

Although the spotlight has turned to the fate of the Peltz-MDOT land, Potter cautioned that it's only a component of the proposed master plan.

Assuming the master plan is approved after that the question would be: what are we going to do with each component? Potter said.

It's expected that a master plan also will be drafted specifically for the Peltz-MDOT land.

"We can't tell you exactly where the ballfields would be at this point," Potter said, adding that landscape architect John Grissim's plan makes it clear no more than the recommended number can be developed on the wooded land.

"We've had a lot of input. The goal is compromise."



Quaker Valley Farms resident Steve Lange, like many of the residents in the subdivision south of the Peltz-MDOT land, is familiar with the wooded terrain, creeks and flat areas near I-696. While touring the land, Lange points to the flat area where athletic fields are proposed.

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Nancy House of Farmington Hills joined about 20 residents and representatives from the Detroit Audubon Society and Friends of the Rouge River on a Saturday morning tour of the controversial Peltz-MDOT acreage, south of I-696 and west of Farmington Road. As House found out, the only way to get down some of the wooded hills was to slide.