

The City Paper
August 26, 2004

Brentwood to vote on space

By Bill Harless, bharless@nashvillecitypaper.com

In June, a group of Brentwood residents, wanting the city to keep its pastoral feel, handed a petition of about 1,600 signatures to the city's Board of Commissioners. They asked that a referendum be held to decide if the city should issue up to \$50 million in bonds for the preservation of permanent green space.

The board agreed and on Sept. 23, Brentwood residents will vote on two issues: on permitting the city to issue bonds for preserving green space and on the issuance of bonds to help pay for an extension of Mallory Lane.

Gil Hutchinson, a board member of Citizens for Brentwood Green Space and a resident of the Highland View subdivision, said development pressures on "a very dwindling supply of land" have "threatened the traditional scenic and rural character Brentwood."

Most of the board members are "getting up in years," Hutchinson said, so he believes preservation is something his group is working on "for future generations — so they can enjoy some of the lifestyle others have had in this community in the years past."

But though "92 percent of the city is zoned residential ... we've discovered that, I think, close to two-thirds of that has already been developed or is already [slated] for development. So even though you see a beautiful farm or a pasture right across the street from you, there's a very good chance that's already been slated for development."

Hutchinson noted the Brentwood 2020 Plan calls for the preservation of parks, open spaces, and historic settings, which he defined as green space.

But Jim Kilpatrick, a resident of the Brentwood South subdivision, said many elderly people, on pensions and with set incomes, live in Brentwood and would not want a property tax increase.

Kilpatrick said he is not against preserving green space but that he thinks the city already has quite a bit. "[E]very high school and every middle school [has] recreational facilities — they've got ball diamonds, soccer fields, stadiums, and so forth, and most of our churches have similar facilities ... so you've got all that green space and all that recreational area over and above what the city itself has ..."

Kilpatrick also noted that in most of Brentwood only one home per acre may be built, so green space is preserved that way, he said.

Property taxes would be used to pay back the bonds for the green space and to pay for the interest they accrue, according to city manager Mike Walker.

The city would have until Jan. 1, 2020, to issue the bonds and thus would be able to spread the issue out over time.

If \$50 million in bonds were all issued at once, “[t]he property tax rate would increase by approximately 30 cents (from 59 to 89 cents),” the question and answer says. “The city property tax bill for the average home valued at \$350,000 would increase from \$516 to \$779 (\$263 annually).”

But if the bonds were not all issued simultaneously, the tax rate would increase incrementally, “with specific tax increases being adopted as part of the annual budget process.”