

## **The City Paper**

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### ***Brentwood mayor asks - Referendum possible on Cal Turner property***

*By Colleen Creamer, ccreamers@nashvillecitypaper.com*

A Brentwood resident, Stephen Prince, is proposing to the city commission that Brentwood hold a referendum to buy Cal Turner's farm and turn it into green space. The same query was posted by then-Vice Mayor Anne Dunn to city manager Mike Walker last October.

Roughly 250 acres of the farm are for sale along Franklin Road. The remainder is flood plain and/or the acreage on which the actual farm exists.

"I really feel very confident that the people of Brentwood who cast their opinion on the 2020 Plan feel the same way today as they did four years ago," said Prince. "They want to see: a) maintain the one-acre lot density; and b) they want to keep some green space within the community."

Prince said if offered the option of increasing Brentwood's property taxes for the land, 60 percent of residents would vote in favor of it.

Turner spokesperson Jane Cleveland said the city might be able to buy the land if it could outbid competitors in a timely manner.

"We will sell it to the highest bidder," said Cleveland. "The question would be whether the city can be in the position to bid. It would take some time to stage a referendum. That is probably the trickiest part."

Prince said he met with Cleveland Monday. One snag, he discovered, was how to get serious bids if the bidder knew they would possibly not be buying the property.

"I don't know if there is anything we can do until we get some sort of definitive pricing structure from the Turner family," Prince said.

Mayor Dunn originated the idea in an e-mail to city manager Mike Walker in the fall asking if the city could hold a referendum to see if residents would support a bond issue.

"I am deadly serious about this referendum option," Dunn said in the e-mail dated Oct 14. "That land IS (emphasis Dunn's) Brentwood."

Cal Turner's Green Acres was at the heart of a squall between Turner and the commission over Turner's plan to make it a mixed-use development of apartments, houses and businesses surrounded by green space. As well, the fate of the farm was a pivotal issue during the May elections, which elected Dunn to the office of mayor and, in turn, sealed the fate of Turner's plan.

The city, said Brentwood city manager, Mike Walker, would need a specific idea of what would exist on the property, how many acres the city could buy and the cost of infrastructure before holding a referendum.

City commissioner Regina Smithson said another option would be to get the land zoned to the new Open Space Residential Development—Innovative Project (OSRD-IP), which saves the open space and concentrates smaller homes on less land.

“Why don’t we try and find some tracts of land where you address the needs of the senior or the young couples who want to move it,” Smithson said. “You don’t jeopardize our one-acre density zoning and you still maximize the number of units the landowner can get.

The new zoning is one option to what some have seen as limited options in Brentwood - the one home per one acre density that permeates the city. It would allow for more, and less expensive homes, to be built on less property.

Cleveland said OSRD-IP requires 65 percent open space. Based on the 40-acre convention for the design of traditional neighborhoods, to build a real neighborhood with two-thirds open space you would need 120 acres. For this reason, there are few parcels in Brentwood which one could apply OSRD-IP in an attempt to build a real neighborhood.”

“The commission really has its hands tied,” said Smithson, “You have a landowner who, if he is not a willing seller, I would not be in favor of going in and condemning his land. We have beautiful parks in Brentwood, and I think you have to have a really good reason to condemn someone’s land, and I am very much in favor of a landowner’s rights.”

If Turner were unwilling to sell the property, one option, though not considered likely, would be to condemn it and buy it for the city in the same way cities condemn and buy easements for roads.

Prince said he might spend his own money to facilitate a referendum.

Dunn would not comment on the proposal.

“It’s whether it is worth it to Brentwood to buy the land so they can drive by it and look at it,” Cleveland said. “It’s just the land at the corner of Franklin and Concord Road and then up behind the estate lots. It doesn’t really go anywhere.”