

Green space advocates plan to seek alternatives

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By Bonnie Burch, Staff Writer

BRENTWOOD - After Brentwood voters rejected two bond referenda in last week's special election, those who campaigned for or against those decisions are left to wonder where they go from here.

Even though the measure that the Citizens for Brentwood Green Space supported lost the election, the nonprofit will probably not go away, said Gil Hutchinson, a member of the group.

"We didn't start out as political action group. And I have a feeling we'll continue in an advocacy role for green space," he said.

Members of CBGS have decided to get together to talk about the group's future with founder Stephen Prince, who was out of town the night of the vote. More than 1,600 signatures were attached to a petition supporting the proposal and circulated by the organization, which ultimately got the referendum on the ballot. Even though it was defeated, 2,868 people voted "yes" on the issue.

"They say the devil is in the details and my feeling is that that there is a general interest from people in the community and they're in agreement to green space. But the referendum was just one of the business models presented to us. We might be looking at other models such as grants and what they're doing down at Harlinsdale Farm. Our objectives haven't changed," he said.

Even Bill Akin, the leader of a group opposed to the green space referendum, said that he wasn't opposed to preserving open space. He said that he just didn't want to see property taxes increased to pay for the city taking out \$50 million worth of bonds to do it. And 52% of the total voters agreed with that assessment.

Early voters had cast 57.9% "no" votes against open space. After Akin heard absentee ballots on election night, he knew the group was well on its way to winning the election.

"After I find out the final, I'll probably go out and give a big war whoop. I was out at just about every poll and I was a little concerned," he said.

But after the total was announced, Akin just smiled broadly.

"I feel fantastic. I'm just glad folks saw that we didn't need anymore taxes. Common sense won out," he said.

Another happy person was Krystal Roark, who led the charge against the Mallory Lane extension. To celebrate the referendum's defeat, she'd like to invite those who fought against the road proposal to Brentwood South subdivision's block party in October.

"It'll allow for a lot of new neighbors to finally meet each other face to face," she said.

Roark said she'd make a list of potential developers who have expressed an interest in the Flag Pole property, which is already zoned for retail, warehouse and light industrial, available to the property owner if they want it.

"We'd like to keep the original zoning like it has been for the last 30 years," she said.

Cam Sorenson, a principal with Southeast Venture which had hoped to develop the property only if Mallory Lane connected to Concord Road and the Flag Pole land was rezoned for commercial, said his company will pull out after voters defeated the road.

"We won't pursue (rezoning). That area will remain zoned for light industrial and residential," he said.

But voters didn't always have an easy time making their decisions. Both races remained close in most precincts. An exception was at Tennessee Baptist Children's Home polling site where almost 70% of voters cast their ballots against the Mallory Lane extension. Many of the voters sent to the site live in homes that surround that property.

The site also had the highest percentage of voters turning out at 26.9% or 726 people out of 2,701 registered voters.

But those who voted on absentee ballots actually gave support of the road extension the edge with 51%.

In all, 6,029 people cast ballots in the special election - a turnout of 28.6% of the city's 21,057 registered voters.