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Brentwood urged to buy land Muslims had wanted for mosque

Brentwood urged to buy open space Muslims wanted

By Bonnie Burch • THE TENNESSEAN • May 29, 2010

BRENTWOOD — A private group dedicated to preserving open space has asked the city to purchase the property where Muslim families wanted to build a mosque.

In an e-mail sent to city commissioners and other officials, Citizens for Brentwood Green Space touted the 14 acres of undeveloped land on Wilson Pike, between Twin Springs subdivision and a pedestrian tunnel leading to Crockett Park, as a possible addition to the existing park system.

"I think it's pretty prudent to consider it. We met with some of the residents, and they have a lot of interest in it," said Gil Hutchinson, president of the green space organization.

The Islamic Center of Williamson County proposed a 12,000-square-foot mosque on the site. But the group of 40 families withdrew the rezoning request last week citing additional costs for a left turn lane as well as opposition from neighbors who expressed worries about flooding and runoff potential, traffic woes and environmental impact. Some foes also conducted an e-mail campaign expressing concern about Islam.

During the public hearing on the matter, several residents said they were surprised to find the land was not part of the nearby park but was private property.

The Adams family owns the land. The property's sale to the Islamic Center was contingent on rezoning approval.

In the letter, the group notes the "broad-based community support" for a park purchase along with preservation of views, wildlife protection and the costs to taxpayers, including building new schools and wear and tear on roadways, that developing it

for homes would bring.

Park fund considered

As part of the six-year Capital Improvements Program, Brentwood is considering moving \$7.1 million into a fund for parkland acquisition and development. Although no specific tracts or areas were identified, leaders wanted to have cash ready in case potential park property came up for sale while real estate prices remain low. The final vote for the CIP plan is expected at the end of June.

Brentwood Mayor Betsy Crossley said she could consider such an idea, but only if the landowners were willing to sell and for the right price.

"I've always been an advocate for more park land, and I think it would be a great addition to the park. It's certainly worth taking a look at, but it's all really a matter of if the value is reasonable," she said.

Contact Bonnie Burch at 615-771-5421 or bburch@tennessean.com.

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