

**Shady Banks Civic Association  
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Meeting Held in the Hortt School Conference Trailer**

The meeting called to order a 7:35 PM PM by President Barbara Haggerty. Approximately 80 neighbors and guests attended.

This was a special meeting called to allow School Board Representative Maureen Dinnen and City Commissioner Cindi Hutchinson to present their compromise plan for the purchase of the Hortt School facility by Broward County for permanent park use.

The guest speakers were Maureen Dinnen and Cindi Hutchinson. Other guests representing the City of Fort Lauderdale were City Manager George Gretsas, Parks & Recreation Director Phil Thornberg and members of their staffs. Other guests from the School Board were Tom Coates and other staff members.

Commissioner Hutchinson (also a member of the Broward County Land Preservation Board) began the discussion by detailing the history of the Hortt property sale. She said that the County has been negotiating the purchase of the property from the School Board for approximately 6 years. The County's intent was to purchase the property with Parks Bond Money and make the entire parcel into a public park – an extension of the existing Hortt Park.

Commissioner Hutchinson went on to explain that about two years ago the County Commission and the School Board agreed on the sale of the parcel to Broward County for approximately \$3.1 million, with \$2 million coming from the County's Parks Bond fund and the remaining \$1.1 million coming from the City of Fort Lauderdale. The mechanics of the sale were to be handled by the staffs of the various agencies involved. At this point Commissioner Hutchinson called on Ms. Dinnen to continue the story.

Ms. Dinnen continued the story and explained that early in 2008 she inquired about the status of the Hortt sale and was told that the paperwork for the deal had never been completed by the County Commission staff. She then contacted County Commissioner John Rodstrom (our District Commissioner) and asked that the Commission staff process the paperwork so the deal could be completed. Mr. Rodstrom told her that because of the delay in processing the paperwork, Commission rules require that the parcel must be re-appraised, and the purchase price be based on the new appraisal.

Following this decision, new appraisals were obtained by the County Commission and the School Board. When the new appraisals came in, the value of the Hortt property was found to have dropped to \$2.8 million and under County Commission regulations, this was the maximum amount that they would be allowed to pay. Ms. Dinnen said that this reduced price was unacceptable to the School Board and that they would reject the County's offer.

Ms. Dinnen went on to explain that as a result of this impasse, she and Commissioner Hutchinson then began negotiations to work out a compromise deal that would be acceptable to the School Board, and that would allow the Hortt deal to go through using the committed \$2 million of Parks Bond funds (from Broward County) and other funds and/or incentives provided by the City of Fort Lauderdale.

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Ms. Dinnen went on to explain that through negotiations between her and Commissioner Hutchinson, a proposed compromise deal was worked out whereby the School Board hopefully will agree to sell the Hortt property to the County for \$2.8 million (the current appraised value) and that the City of Fort Lauderdale, the agency designated by Broward County to manage the property, will provide concessions to “soften the blow” to the School Board. The concession that the City has offered is one year of free rent of the Hortt facility. When added onto the already-negotiated one year of paid rent (to be paid to Broward County), the School Board will have a maximum of 2 years to allow the current Hortt staff to locate and prepare a new home before vacating the property.

Ms Dinnen said she plans to discuss this compromise with her School Board colleagues and urge them to officially accept the deal at the next School Board meeting. She said that she is happy with the deal and feels that it will be accepted.

Following the presentation by Commissioner Hutchinson and Ms. Dinnen, Julie Hager, our designated Hortt Sale Coordinator, publicly thanked the two officials for their efforts on behalf of Hortt Park and our Shady Banks neighbors. Julie went on to tell the group that six years back, when the Hortt sale was first under consideration, she coordinated a petition drive to get our neighbors to ask the School Board to approve the Hortt sale. In addition to submitting the petition signatures, she got several neighborhood kids to write letters to the School Board members urging their support for the sale. Julie reported that these kids are all teenagers now and she introduced them. To close her presentation, Julie had five of the teenagers publicly read their letters, which were originally written six years ago. The kids who read their letters were Jessica Mellenger, Chad Hager, Brittany Henry, Katy Mellenger and Ryan Mellenger.

Ms. Dinnen then thanked the kids for reading their letters and thanked everyone for coming. And in closing, she reassured the group that there is no sentiment on the School Board to sell the Hortt property to any developer. Next, Commissioner Hutchinson thanked everyone for coming and told the group that the City also would not be receptive to development of the Hortt property.

Finally, President Haggerty thanked everyone for coming, and for their efforts in lobbying for the Hortt sale.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM

Reported by  
Dave Clancy, Secretary