



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF LAWRENCE/DOUGLAS COUNTY

July 24, 2016

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To: Mr. Patrick Kelly, Chair, and Planning Commission Members
Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Commission

RE: ITEM NO. 5C: PRELIMINARY PLAT FOR NAISMITH CREEK ADDITION; 751
W 29TH TERRACE

The League of Women Voters of Lawrence-Douglas County is concerned about the proposal for Naismith Creek Addition, which would create 65 single-dwelling residential lots on approximately 15 acres adjacent to Naismith Creek. One of our important Environmental Positions is that "development should avoid hazardous building sites such as unstable slopes, uncompacted or undesignated fill, or areas subject to flooding."

Our concern is with potential flooding of homes that would be built there. Neighbors remember many times when this area has been flooded. In 1993, water was released from Clinton Lake to keep it from over-topping the emergency spillway. This raised the level in the Wakarusa River, thereby closing the flap gates at the south end of the drainage ditch along the west side of the original Baker Wetlands. That resulted in having no outlet for the storm water coming off the KU campus, from the neighborhood and from the commercial development along 23rd Street. Several cars and trucks parked along Belle Haven Drive had water above their tires. If these circumstances occur again, worse flooding will probably happen. Additional impervious surface would be created in the form of rooftops and driveways, which would increase runoff. In anticipation, there is a notation on the plat that if basements are going to be used, it is suggested to install sump pumps.

The plat does not comply with Subdivision Design regulations, which require that a drainage plan be shown. The plat should show "Location of any area in the Floodplain Overlay District, locations and direction of flow of all water courses; and base flood elevation at water course entrances to and exits from the proposed Subdivision."

We think it would be desirable to leave this site as open space. If there is to be development, there should be a buffer between the creek and the buildings.

Thank you for considering our letter.

Sincerely yours,

Marlene Merrill
Co-President

Alan Black, Chairman
Land Use Committee

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July 24, 2016

To: Chairman Patrick Kelly, Members of the Lawrence/Douglas County Planning Commission

From: Joyce and Ron Wolf, 1605 East 318 Road, Lecompton, KS 66050

Subject: ITEM NO. 5C PRELIMINARY PLAT FOR NAISMITH CREEK ADDITION

We apologize for being unable to attend the meeting on Monday. We both are members of the Board of Jayhawk Audubon Society and that same date and time will be the annual planning meeting – preparing for the coming 2016-17 year, which closely follows the KU academic calendar.

We are interested in Item 5C because we lived in Indian Hills and were active in the Neighborhood Association and continue to own property in the area. Our first reaction when we looked at the preliminary plat was: “that’s a lot of houses in a relatively small area.” When compared to the lots already built upon to the north, those that already exist look to be about twice as large as the proposed ones. Upon closer examination, it appears that there are hardly any open spaces left for storm water to go during heavy rainfalls. With the addition of all these rooftops and driveways, there will be an enormous amount of extra runoff going into the adjacent Naismith Creek. Has anyone calculated the amount of extra runoff from this area after being developed as proposed?

For those unfamiliar with the Indian Hills area, it is part of a much larger watershed and receives most of the storm water from the KU campus east of Iowa Street and south of Jayhawk Boulevard. We all are aware that more impervious surfaces continue to be added by new construction on the campus. Additionally all the commercial development along 23rd Street from Iowa to Louisiana drains to the south and are part of this drainage area. Naismith Creek is the primary water course which carries most of this runoff. We both remember that during extremely heavy downpours, cars and trucks parked along Belle Haven Drive often would have water above the tires.

During the flood of 1993, the intersection of Louisiana and 31st Streets was completely flooded and impassible. This was due to the discharge from Clinton Lake, which raised the level of the Wakarusa River above normal levels, so that the flap gates (at the southern point where the drainage ditch along the west side of the original Baker Wetlands) were closed. This made all the drainage from Naismith Creek and the “Belle Haven ditch” back up because there was no place for the water to go, thus flooding the above-mentioned intersection. We visited this site on Sunday afternoon; the situation remains the same, so when the Wakarusa River is running higher than normal, the flaps will close and drainage from Naismith will have nowhere to go.

Furthermore, with the suggestion that “lots with basements it is recommended to install sump pumps” indicates that someone recognizes the inherent risks of building in this area so close to and in some places part of the floodplain.

Given the regular and historic nature of flooding in the area, it seems to us that a few adjustments to the new subdivision would be desirable:

I – If the southern-most line of lots from at least lots #20 through #34 would be eliminated, not only would this allow the open space to be available for the smooth continuation of the Naismith Valley Park and Bike

Path it would, more importantly, provide the area with a buffer from floods. And as open space, it would be more complementary with Naismith Park father north. We can think of no other place in Lawrence where a dedicated, non-motorized path utilizes a street designed for motorized traffic. A bike path that is diverted onto a city street, as is proposed, may pose safety hazards that could be avoided by continuing the bike path along the southern portion of the area. At one time, the IHNA adopted this position to maintain part of the area as city-owned open space and continue the park/bike path to a point along Louisiana Street.

II – This reconfiguration of the preliminary plat would also fulfill the top scores of the newly released (July 12, 2016) findings of the Lawrence Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The **Summary of Selected Findings of the Master Plan** states that the most important amenities in Lawrence included: 1) open space and natural area, 2) community parks, 3) trails and pathways, all of which are designed to encourage citizens to spend more time outside. Also as part of this survey, the following were found: The most important aspects of Lawrence's open space and natural areas are "protecting/preserving existing open space and natural areas" and "protecting wildlife habitats." As part of the finding, the top two values were: Promoting Active Lifestyles and Investing in Youth – totally in sync with the suggestion to ensure the area under consideration incorporates open space, preserves and extends natural areas, and provides immeasurable benefits to residents of the area.

Again, by leaving the southernmost portion of the plat as open space, this would provide a wonderful example of development being compatible with and recognizing the opinions expressed by a large majority of citizens of Lawrence regarding what they see as desirable. Perhaps this portion of the park could be named in memory of a loved one of the developers – much like the McGrew Nature Preserve near Quail Run Elementary School and the Pat Dawson Billings Nature Area near Southwest Middle School.

III – By turning the southern portion of the preliminary plat into dedicated open space, it would provide not only a buffer from floods, it would also be a great place for neighborhood children to be able to play close to home without having to cross Louisiana Street, which is a major arterial and carries a lot of traffic.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Joyce and Ron Wolf

PS: We will try to also send a photo of the flap gates, to make that part of the letter clearer as to what happens when they are closed by the pressure of high water levels in the Wakarusa River.