

City Council lassos Morse property

Officials anticipate ranch-like park with trails, play areas, picnicking



The Senator's study contains a large collection of editorial cartoons depicting Morse in various parts of his public life.

It appears that the Wayne Morse ranch will finally be put into public ownership.

By deciding Wednesday to spend \$15,600 of city funds to complete the long-in-limbo acquisition, the Eugene City Council tied up the last loose ends in the \$309,000 purchase. The \$15,600 will come out of funds from the Crest Drive Bond Sale earmarked for parkland acquisition in south Eugene.

The council reversed its earlier decision not to use city funds to purchase the 27-acre ranch when Nature Conservancy, the nonprofit group handling the purchase, said it was short on money from other sources, and was notified that it had to exercise its option to buy the ranch from Morse's family by July 16.

The council's action is contingent on final approval of a \$133,200 matching grant from the federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. The bureau has already given tentative approval to the grant which matches the total sum of \$100,000 from the State Legislature and \$33,200 from Community Development funds originating in the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Final approval is expected shortly.

Nature Conservancy has decided to donate \$27,000 to the final purchase, and that

meant that the city only had to come up with \$282,000 from any combination of its sources. City Manager Charles Henry called the use of the city money "an outstanding investment."

Where will it go now?

"We will not apply for a three-year interim use permit," said Edwin Smith, director of parks and recreation. "This will give us the opportunity to develop a master plan while we could, for example, lease out the land for grazing cattle."

In asking the council to "commit the City of Eugene to maintain it (the Morse Ranch) perpetually as a public open space for historical and recreational purposes," Smith said he already had some ideas on the future use of the area.

"We see it as an open space," said Smith, "with nature trails, play areas, and picnicking. We also will try to use the existing buildings in some community fashion, such as a center for meetings. And, we hope to be able to have a museum where we can display Sen. Morse's memorabilia—notably his cartoon collection."

Morse died in 1974 after serving as U.S. senator from Oregon from 1944 to 1968. He served as dean of the University's law school from 1930 to 1941.

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The home of the late Sen. Wayne Morse graces the 27-acre site slated for public open space.

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