

COMMUNITY

Public input needed for park

By Rebecca Merritt
Oregon Daily Emerald

Last November, Lane County voters decided the future of East Alton Baker Park didn't include golf courses — or any other development that would destroy the park's natural habitat.

After the election, the Eugene Planning and Development Department and Willamalane Park and Recreation District appointed a 15-member citizen committee to develop a plan that reserves the park for passive recreation uses. However, the park's future does not rest solely in the hands of the committee.

The East Alton Baker Park Citizens' Planning Committee needs public input in their attempt to establish a workable plan, and last night was the first opportunity for Lane County residents to air their views concerning the park's future.

"Now that there's not a golf course, what do you want to see?" asked Joseph Minato at the committee's public forum and workshop. More than 30 concerned citizens discussed ideas for future park usage in small group sessions facilitated by the committee staff members.

Ideas ranged from a frisbee golf course to interpretive nature trails. However, what remains at question is the definition of passive recreation. The county defines passive recreation as any recreational form dependent of the natural landscape, including hiking, boating, plant study and kite flying. But some residents want to stretch that definition to include such sports as archery.

Minato said he expects controversy with the park plan but believes it is important that community members have a voice. "I'm also quite optimistic that it will be a healthy controversy," he added.

Also at issue last night was the effects of the four proposed solutions to traffic problems on Ferry Street Bridge to the park. Many people attending the forum said they are concerned about two alternatives that would put bridges through East Alton Baker Park. "Leave it as is," was the popular reply last night by citizens questioned about possible development in the park.

The East Alton Baker Park Citizens' Planning Committee hopes to have a draft plan for the park by the end of the year, said committee member Arthur Mancl. Another public forum will be scheduled for further public comment at that time. Committee members are currently handing out a public questionnaire regarding park options.



Barbara Hasek, one of about 20 concerned citizens, listens to comments from the Citizens Planning Committee.

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