

PARK ...

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Baertschiger added that some deed conditions were included with the transfer proposal, such as that the Sportsman Association must maintain the property and keep it open to the public in perpetuity in its current state. "That way, our insurance company would be a little happier with us," the board chair added.

Next, Baertschiger addressed opponents of the transfer who have expressed to him their ire that the county is "giving away" a property with an assessed value of \$1.6 million.

"I would say that that's an unfair statement," Baertschiger countered. "That is what it is appraised at. However, with other considerations of the property out there, that price could be significantly less if there had to be any kind of mitigation for hazards."

"Reassured," Baertschiger continued, "if it stays as a facility - a gun range, a shooting range and a sportsman's park - we're probably fine. If we sold the property to somebody and they divided it up for housing or some other uses, then there would have to probably be some very expensive mitigation."

County legal counsel Wally Hicks explained that the April 6 session's public hearing was in consideration of alienating

Sportsman Park from county inventory, clearing the way for its future transfer to the Sportsman Association.

A flurry of negative comments emerged during public testimony, starting with one citizen accusing a commissioner (they did not name names) of having a conflict of interest because the commissioner is allegedly a member of the Sportsman Park shooting range and may have a personal relationship with Sportsman Association personnel.

Another commenter claimed to be a realtor representing a client interested in buying Sportsman Park, and was clearly not enthused by the county's course of action in transferring rather than selling the property.

Others praised the Sportsman Association for running the gun club "very, very well," with one resident saying its use by police officers for firearms practice is important given the organized crime in Josephine County. Another spoke of JCSA's "perfect safety record."

On the other side of the argument, several citizens expressed opposition to parting with such an asset when it could be utilized in a way that's more beneficial to the community at large, such as a housing development or new animal shelter facility. The implications of having a private corporation running the gun club with no county rules to abide by were also brought up.

The commissioners' integrity

was also called into question by a speaker who accused them of conducting all deliberations on the matter in "secret executive sessions" and not being transparent about the specific reasons it is in the county's best interest to give the property away to a private gun range corporation. They also speculated that the commissioners may have a "secret agenda" where the property is involved, and added it makes no sense to give away a valuable property when the county is facing financial woes.

Over a dozen other members of the community spoke during the hearing, several of them JCSA members. The prevailing consensus was that the county has not been transparent enough in providing reasons why the Sportsman Park property is being alienated and transferred, and should postpone any action until these details come to light. "Maintain the status quo" was a phrase uttered by more than one speaker.

Baertschiger sought to clarify the purpose of the public hearing when everyone interested in speaking had said their piece: "I listened to the comments and it seems like people are thinking that because of a statement in the Daily Courier that this is your last chance. This is not true; we're not taking any action."

Raising his voice, the board chair went on, "This is not the last opportunity to speak out even though

the Courier put that out there, okay?"

"The Courier put it out there like we're going to make a decision and take your Sportsman Park away. That is not what is going to happen."

Baertschiger invited Hicks back to the podium to clarify some of the misconceptions surrounding the property transfer. Notably, Hicks said the profits of a sale of the Sportsman Park could not go to the sheriff's office, as some commenters suggested. Those funds would be earmarked for the Parks Department and would have to be used for parks-related transactions.

Hicks read a requirement in the proposed contract with the Sportsman Association aloud: "The Association agrees as a condition of the transfer to continue to own, operate and maintain the property in perpetuity, as a safe, high-quality firing range that is accessible to both Association members and the general public."

It was emphasized that Sportsman Park would revert to county ownership if JCSA were to violate the terms. Baertschiger also sought confirmation from Hicks that the county's insurance rate would go up if Sportsman Park is not alienated by the county. Hicks remarked that the county's risk assessor received notice that the rate would indeed go up.

Additionally, Hicks said the county's insurance informed him that pollution expenses would not be covered, which was a concern due to

potential lead contamination at the gun range. The legal counsel added the county is not conceding any environmental liability.

Commissioner Dan DeYoung said he is a member of JCSA. "If you want me to step down, I'll be glad to step down," said DeYoung. "But I'm not going to because I don't get any monetary thing from the Sportsman Association; I don't get any special privileges."

Baertschiger, who is also a Sportsman Association member, said he does not feel his and DeYoung's memberships constitute conflicts of interest.

Commissioner Darin Fowler stated, "I'm not a member. And the basic conflict of interest ethically is you make money off your decision or one of your relatives makes money. So, it's not like the Biden administration. We don't do that here."

A question from Fowler prompted Hicks to explain that in the wake of the county's insurance threatening increased rates and no coverage for pollution, county staff did look into private insurance options, but found no feasible choices. The county's insurance vendor has urged the transfer of Sportsman Park.

In light of the deluge of questions and skepticism in the county's course of action, the commissioners decided to continue the hearing in two weeks to get all concerns addressed.

KCA ...

Continued from A-1

According to the co-founders, a survey they conducted based on 75 responses found that over 70% of respondents saw KCA as a valid high school option. They mentioned some of the feedback gathered, which included: "It would be a boon to the children of our community to have choices when it comes to their education" and "Please let's make a new high school happen ASAP."

KCA's campus enrollment projection yielded that 30 students are planned for the 2022-2023 school year, and only grade levels 9 and 10 would be included. It is anticipated that student growth would increase by about 15 students per year until capacity is reached at 80, and all four high school grades would be represented by the 2024-2025 school year. The teacher to student ratio would be 1:15.

The target student population for KCA was said to be homeschool students, local students currently attending out of district schools and youth who aren't fitting into a traditional school model. Serving the needs of all students, including those with special needs, would

be emphasized. Restorative justice and socio-emotional learning would be practices KCA incorporates.

Co-founder Kaci Elder noted that her son is "thriving" as a junior at IVHS, and that KCA would partner with IVHS as "sibling schools." Collaboration with TRSD would also be a focus.

Other organizations KCA would pursue collaborations with include the Southern Oregon Guild, Rusk Ranch Nature Center and I.V. radio station KXCJ.

After the presentation, the well-attended meeting entered its public testimony portion, and so many citizens had signed up to speak that the TRSD board reduced individuals' speaking time from three to two minutes in the interest of time, as board members sought to ask questions of the KCA teacher leaders later in the forum.

An outpouring of community support for KCA was put forth, much of it coming from locals who knew the co-founders personally and spoke to their qualifications.

A sample of the testimonials:

-Kate Dwyer, former TRSD board chair: "It's been my experience for quite a few years now that the individuals who are developing this proposal

are highly credentialed, highly responsible, have excellent follow-through, very good communication, are able to take criticism, will work professionally with the school district, and I have the highest degree of confidence that you will not have the kind of headaches that have sometimes been experienced with other (charter schools)."

-John Gardiner, tenured professor of environmental management: "My opinion is that you couldn't hope for a finer set of educators... I thoroughly recommend them to you and I'm most impressed myself. I hope to be part of the proceedings in due course."

-Lindsey B. Jones, former city councilor: "I've worked with this group for a long time on lots of community projects and I just want to voice my full support as both a community member but also from my chair at the Illinois Valley Community Development Organization."

The last part of the session was devoted to a Q&A between the TRSD board and the KCA applicants. Three Rivers Superintendent Dave Valenzuela opened up the Q&A by stressing the importance of having the board get all relevant questions answered: "The board has an immense

responsibility to make sure that we've done our due diligence in making sure that this meets all the criteria for a public education institution."

Questions addressed the responsibilities of the KCA board, budgeting and fundraising, compliance with state laws on capping enrollment, etc.

Forsythe assured the TRSD board that it is reasonable to plan for nearly a quarter of the school's budget to come from community fundraising, citing the Dome School in Takilma having success with this method. He added that KCA will likely lease a property to conduct classes at in the first few school years, or accept a community donation of a site.

"This first year is gonna be rough budget-wise," said Forsythe. "We've gotta do a lot of fundraising, and we've gotta put a lot of work into this."

Forsythe said that KCA would like to acquire a bus for field trips at some point, but acknowledged it might not be feasible for the first school year.

Deputy Superintendent Casey Alderson raised the concern that state law requires high school students receive 990 instruction hours, but KCA only gets to 805 in the school schedule. "That leaves you about 28

school days short," Alderson added.

Maglio countered that by her calculations, the instruction hours that would be offered by KCA exceed the 990 required when two-week intensives at the start and end of school years are factored in, as well as professional development and family conferences.

Elder answered a question regarding staffing and said KCA's leadership would be non-hierarchical, with all five teacher leaders responsible for distinct

aspects of schooling. Kinstler and Elder, the only credentialed teachers of the five, will be responsible for teaching 70% of instruction hours for students, with Kinstler teaching language arts and Elder social studies. The other three, with college education and experience teaching, will cover other subjects, with Maglio teaching science, Forsythe math and DeNardo health.

SEE KCA ON A-10



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