

Neighborhood park awaits governor's OK

Boys and Girls Clubs selling former homestead land.

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Neighbors and community leaders are urging Gov. Sean Parnell to approve \$4 million in state spending to buy a bit of green space off Tudor Road and turn it into a city park.

Waldron Lake, a 17-acre parcel with a small lake, is owned by Boys & Girls Clubs-Alaska, and used for soccer and football fields, for neighborhood skating sometimes in winter, and as a summertime haven for geese and their goslings, ducks and people alike.

The property is on the market and could go for commercial development.

The Legislature approved the money needed to buy it for the city instead. Now the question is whether the appropriation will survive Parnell's cuts to the capital budget. It's one of hundreds of earmarks in the capital budget awaiting his approval or veto, expected to come before July 1.

Boys & Girls Clubs-Alaska has owned the land for almost 40 years, having bought it from a member of a homesteading family.

"Unfortunately, we can no longer hold onto the property," said Alana Humphrey, the group's interim CEO. "We need to put those funds into supporting the 10,000 kids statewide that we serve."

Federal money to support the organization has dropped steeply over the past four to five years, she said.

Christy LeBlond, whose family lives across the street from Waldron Lake, said she's been going to community councils and distributing fliers to let neighbors know what's at stake.

"It's a beautiful green space in the center of town," she said. "It would be nice to keep it that way."

Sen. Johnny Ellis and Rep. Berta Gardner, Anchorage Democrats who sponsored the appropriation, produced fliers asking people to contact the governor.

"This is something that's a one-time-only shot," said Gardner, noting that some other appropriations such as those for classroom technology could be requested again if they don't make it this time.

"This is an opportunity that will be lost if the governor vetoes it."

The Anchorage Assembly and Mayor Dan Sullivan included Waldron Lake in the city's legislative requests.

Sullivan said the fact that Boys & Girls Clubs has offered to maintain the area for the next 20 years is a selling point.

"One of the challenges if we had to take it into parkland and maintain it, we just don't have the resources," the mayor said.

"We've been after that lake for a long time," said Anchorage Assembly member Dick Traini, who

represents the area.

Much of the rest of Roger and Marcie Waldron's old homestead south of Tudor has already become subdivisions or church property. The Waldrons homesteaded shortly after Roger came home from World War II, said one of their sons, Steve Waldron.

"A lot of people thought they were crazy for living that far out of town," said Steve Waldron. Lake Otis Parkway was a road, but "Tudor Road was like a moose trail," he said.

Roger Waldron died in a plane crash in 1962.

Marcie later married John Trent, and in 1972, sold the Waldron Lake acreage to the Boys' Club at a deep discount.

Marcie Trent, a well-known runner, died in a bear attack in 1995.

"I'm pretty strongly in favor of it remaining a park," Steve Waldron said. "It was definitely my mother's intention when she gave them that land for it to be a park. She wanted it to be used by people in the community."

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