

## City plans park Casa Grande council gives land purchase initial OK

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### **If all goes well, Casa Grande will soon have 120 acres for a regional park on the north side.**

Monday night, the City Council approved purchasing 100 acres at the northwest corner of Hopi Drive and Pinal Avenue for \$4.7 million and accepting a donation of another 20 acres from the sellers, Richard and Robert Linden, whose family has owned the property for years. The Lindens will keep 39.22 acres in the northeast corner of the 160-acre parcel for future development.

Final negotiations are under way, Deputy City Manager Larry Rains said, with documents to be available by the time of the next council meeting, when the purchase ordinance must again be considered.

Rains said the city now has \$3.5 million set aside from park land impact fees paid by developers and has been able to set aside enough money in the General Fund reserves to cover the difference, with later repayment from other funding. That financing plan will also be brought before the council.

Rains said city staff members have been looking for such a park site for at least three years. He said Community Services Director Mary Johnson told him Monday night that the Hopi property "aligns very nicely with the parks master plan, which recommended that we look for a northern site in our regional system."

No time has been given for any construction or other work at the site.

Councilman Karl Montoya said the purchase "comes at a perfect time, especially after we went through the ordeal with the rodeo grounds and squeezed everybody together and pushed everybody back and I think there's a lot of opportunities with 120 acres."

The city earlier this year struggled with a master plan for additions to Ed Hooper Rodeo Park, at Rodeo Road and Pinal Avenue. The city owns 160 acres there, but about half of it already is developed, complicating the plan.

City Manager Jim Thompson said the Lindens approached him about the time he took his position in early 2004 wanting to know what Casa Grande would like to see done with the property.

"Their father acquired it years and years ago and there's a long history there, really community based and community minded and I appreciate it."

Each year, Thompson said, the Lindens have asked for updates on city plans, wanting "to do something that was great for the community. That's very seldom that that occurs, that they come to us and ask us what we see as our vision for the future."

In other action Monday night, the council:

-- Accepted a \$9,500 state grant to programs for teens at the city library and one from the state for \$3,700 to help fund a personal finances management program to be offered at the library.

-- Gave initial approval to annexation of 4.9 acres south of Ghost Ranch Road east of Pinal Avenue and 970 acres generally south of Selma Highway and west of Toltec Buttes Road.

-- Appointed Barbara Miller to the Clean and Beautiful Advisory Board, Matt Herman to the Planning and Zoning Commission, Lawrence Williams to the Airport Advisory Board and Susan Wortman, Jason Taylor and Claudel Young to the Arts and Humanities Commission

- Approved a firefighters training agreement with Central Arizona College.
- Approved a \$392,899 contract for an electronic backup system for the city.
- Announced two vacancies on the Golf Course Advisory Committee and one on the Historic Preservation Commission. Applications are available at the City Clerk's Office in City Hall, 510 E. Florence Blvd.
- Heard a proclamation for August as Children's Vision and Learning Month.