

News from the Helotes Heritage Association

Dear Readers,

Northwest Bexar County is experiencing explosive growth both in the residential and business sectors. This growth is threatening to consume Helotes and to do it in a few short years.

During the past two years, the City of Helotes desperately sought to find and purchase a reasonable parcel of land to develop a park for present and future generations suitable for hiking, having picnics, playfields, and a playground and located where it would neither disrupt nearby residences nor be impacted by residential activities and to acquire a park before all reasonable parcels are either developed or prohibitively expensive. There were no properties near Helotes that came close to meeting these criteria.

By chance, the 33-acre parcel on Scenic Loop came available. This piece of property amazingly fit all the criteria. More incredibly, the State of Texas made available more than enough matching funds to help purchase and develop the property.

Sadly the 33-acre parcel became a political football. Ultimately Mayor Schoolcraft stalled the purchase of the property long enough that the 33-parcel was finally bought by others and at a price considerably greater than that previously negotiated by the past Mayor and City Council.

Mayor Schoolcraft is now attempting to designate a number of disconnected parcels spread throughout Iron Horse Canyon as the Sen. Frank Madla Memorial Park. These parcels were previously designated as Open Space lands by the Helotes Parks and Open Spaces Committee. They are well suited to be preserved as open space and green area, but highly inappropriate for a multi-use park. Their sole utility is for limited access for hiking. They cannot be used for play areas, picnics, playfields, or playgrounds. They are mostly inaccessible except through the backyards of the residents of Iron Horse Canyon and limited access from Iron Horse Parkway in the middle of the neighborhood. There is no parking and no flat land available for park related activities.

Now that the 33-acre parcel is no longer available, there is no urgency to designate which parcel of land should become the Sen. Frank Madla Memorial Park. The State of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will not accept the application to acquire the funds to purchase and develop the Sen. Frank Madla Memorial Park until September 2007 and will accept the application any time before September 2008. The State then allows up to four full years to use the funds.

Yet Mayor Schoolcraft has included on this Thursday's Helotes City Council agenda a Resolution to steamroll through the designation of the discontinuous parcels in Iron Horse Canyon as the Sen. Frank Madla Memorial Park. The agenda item is as follows:

"Discussion of an action on approving a Resolution authorizing application for \$1.125 million, Sen. Frank Madla grant, from Texas Parks and Wildlife for public park and recreation purposes at Iron Horse Canyon and designating the Mayor as the representative for the applicant in dealing with Texas Parks and Wildlife."

HHA strongly urges Mayor Schoolcraft and the Helotes City Council to not pursue this ill-conceived effort to squander what may be Helotes's last real opportunity to establish a truly multi-use park that will benefit all in our community and be there for future generations.

Please contact the City Council members and attend the July 26 Helotes City Council Meeting to urge the City Council to not approve this Resolution.

Sincerely,
Ron Green
HHA, President