AA residents fight to save Black Pond Woods

BY CHARLES CHILD
CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

The birds are returning to Black Pond Woods, breaking a long win-
er's silence with early morning calls. The sun shines 14 hours a
day, compared to just nine hours on
late December, casting green from
sages, hickories and maples.

The woods are a rarity in Ann
Arbor. These 32 pristine wooded
acres, complete with a pond, are just
two miles from downtown.
The problem, for neighbors and
migrating birds, is that builders
look to develop 36 acres of the land.

The community's third develop-
ment plan, however, was approved
by the city's planning commission
last month. Tonight, the city coun-
cil will consider the plan.

“Ann Arbor is running out of prime pieces (of
parkland). The city is looking more like
Southfield,” Peg Molin, Ann Arbor
Parks Advisory Commission
chairwoman, said.

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Council OKs Black Pond Woods delay

By JUDSON BRANAM
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

A litany of complaints from activists opposed to the construction of houses in Black Pond Woods led the Ann Arbor City Council to agree Monday to a one-month delay of a building plan.

Activists working to arrange financing to buy the 26-acre nature area in north-central Ann Arbor to preserve it as a park raised several objections to a plan to develop 43 homes on the land.

Members of Friends of Black Pond Woods, a group pressing for purchase of the area, argued that the plan did not meet the city's natural features guidelines for preserving landmark trees, and that the land's steep slopes and wetlands would be destroyed by the site work needed to create building lots.

"Once the first bulldozer moves on the first of that 25 acres, you can kiss it all goodbye," said park supporter John Benzik.

Subdivision opponents also said council approval of the construction plans would hurt their efforts to buy the land and give it permanent protection from development.

Black Pond neighbor Pamela Etzorn-Dymond said she is confident financing will be available for the $1.8 million parcel, which is owned by Courtelis Development Co. of Miami and slated for development by Novi builder John Vincenti.

Vincenti representative Ray Cousineau said the company has provided all information requested by city staffers, and that the company is willing to delay construction until Aug. 1 to give preservationists time to raise money.

Etzorn-Dymond would not name the funding source, but said the Trust for Public Land would act as a funding agency to transfer the land to public ownership. She told council members — who earlier had discussed the large site such a purchase would take from the $1 million-a-year city parks acquisition fund — that the city would not have to contribute to the purchase price if her plans succeed.

Preservationists, including the city Parks Advisory Commission, have tried to arrange payment on the land in exchange for a delay in development. The city also has made its own effort, applying for a state grant to help purchase the area as a park.

Council members asked City Hall staff to determine whether the plan adheres to the natural features guidelines, and to look at potential drainage problems.

Discussion of the site plan will resume June 11.