Green Party takes heat over mayoral race

Robin Alvarez and Andrei Jackson had submitted their names as potential Green nominees during the party's convention in Lansing on July 21. But party members rejected both candidates, ultimately deciding not to back anyone.

"Both women claim the Greens forced out the candidacy of Democratic nominee John Hieatt, who earlier this month asked the Greens to stay out of the mayor's race. "Even if they didn't want one of us, a mayoral candidate should have been selected," said Jackson, who tried to run in a Democratic City Council race this year but was disqualified for insufficient signatures on her filing papers. "It is clear that an agreement has been made about John Hieatt and the mayoral race."

"I was surprised from the beginning," said Alvarez, a left-wing activist who gained notoriety for her arrest during the violent anti-Klan protest in 1990. "I believe the Greens sold us out."

But party leaders say Jackson and Alvarez were upset over the Greens' lack of history with the party, not because the Greens didn't want to act as spoilers. Neither woman had ever attended a party meeting until a week before the convention.

"We didn't feel comfortable running together we didn't know how high-profile it would get," said Alvarez.

See GREEN, D2

Neighbors protest tree cutting

...Request for removal of brush sparks tree removal -- and controversy.

By SUSAN L. OPPAT

NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Amy Marcinkowski and Marcie Keat are a couple of tree huggers, and proud of it.

And that goes for a lot of their Cloverdale Park neighbors who stand out even in a city that has won national recognition for its devotion to trees.

So when a city arborist who actually lives in the neighborhood, and his crew, cut down some of the park trees last month -- when the neighbors cried some tears to their brushes and thinned out the scrub brush taken to cut the area -- well, that was enough for a movement.

It all started when Keat called the city to complain about the brush growth and overgrown vines choking a tall stand of willow and box elder trees in front of the small neighborhood park. It allowed access to the nearby houses, but was getting out of control. The city had to act.

One week later, the city's crew returned with a chainsaw to cut down the trees and brush. The neighbors objected, and a protest was organized.

"We want our park back," said Keat. "We want our trees back."

Here's where the controversy comes in.

The park, with its playground equipment, picnic area, and benches, is a little like the working-class neighborhood during the day -- quiet and, literally, full of trees. A huge oak is one corner of the park is wide enough and flat enough to seat seven. Mothers change their kids' diapers on it.

Trees shade all the streets around the park -- Cloverdale, Willow, Manor, and -- and the park itself.

The Keats live across the street. They're specific when they say they want the trees cut down. They're also specific when they say they want the brush removed. They've been working with the city to make the park safe.

"We've been working with the city," said Keat. "We want to remove the trees, but we don't want to cut them down."

Muirwasowski and Keat checked daily in the last 14 years.

See CLOVERDALE, D2

DON FABER
FABER'S WORLD

Tennis event nets funds to fight cancer

Contractor:
Natural gas line wasn't marked

by CHONG W. PYEN

NEWS STAFF REPORTER

The contractor putting in a sewer line in nearby River Road had not been informed of a
Township is used, according to a June survey of 365 residents. Vacant 18% (4,288 acres)

Agricultural 72%
(16,752 acres)

Commercial/ industrial 1%
(17 acres)

Single-family housing 9%
(2,095 acres)

Note: Percentages are rounded.

Source: Belfer Arroyo Associates
NEWS GRAPHIC + MARK THOMPSON-KOLAR

Schermhorn said Heftie — a former chairman of the Recycle Ann Arbor and Huron River Watershed Council member — attended a meeting last week and asked the Greens not to cut down any trees. Heftie noted that the city actually comes to figures from the township issued 17 years ago, or new dwellings, and in the first year just two.

For that the desire for more homes and the city’s growth rate, he have farmers who are protected,” farmers may want to the future to pay for a child’s education or their high taxes and supplies,” he said. “You can buy a lot of bread at the groce store, but the farmer gets the grain.”

Former hospital

He said the corner performing any duties at his hospital Lenawee County, and that building is under threat. Medical School in April, it made the city of Ypsilanti to pace for two years in building a clinic to who might have used yet.

Seeking the space, said a spokeswoman for it’s up to the city, who wants to use it. No one wanted it. It was not until they agreed to use it. Hours?

The University of Michigan Medical Center also is interested in the offer, said Kara Gartman, a spokeswoman for the hospital system.

U-M backed practices already take up much of the space in the medical building at Beyer, a site the university has named the Ypsilanti Health Center.

The two-story medical building has a little more than 25,000 square feet. There are eight units, and seven are occupied by medical services, including the Oakwood Pharmacy on the first floor.

Continued from D1

CLOVERDALE: Arborist cites concern for security

week of July with the crew, and were reassured that no healthy trees would be removed. Marcinowski checked one last time the night before, and left her home at 11 a.m. July 26. When she returned that afternoon, an entire stand of six or seven trees, and another eight in another stand, were down and gone.

“I was horrified to see this beautiful little island taken down,” she said.

Despite the order for cutting only brush and dead trees, city commission members said they would cut at least six additional mature box elders. William Lawrence, city manager of forestry and horticulture, confirmed.

Lawrence described the 20- to 60-foot elder trees as “junk” trees, short-lived, vulnerable to disease, and not particularly attractive.

Veteran city arborist Cameron Knight, whose crew cut the additional trees, said his overriding concern about the park was security. He cut the trees and brush to provide a safe place for the neighbors, he also told them cutting the additional trees was the best thing for the park — and he wouldn’t have to return every year to cut more brush.

Marcinowski, Keat and neighbor Braxton Blake loved the grove of trees, both for the look they gave the park, and the home they provided to birds and other wildlife. “People wanted those trees,” said Blake, who lives around the corner from the park on Stellar.

Lawrence cited calls from some residents of the neighborhood who actually wanted more of the trees cut down, but the trees supporters dispute that claim.

“We know the people here,” Blake said. “We don’t know who was calling for the trees down. The city would just like to avoid controversy. They’re saying it’s a mistake, and not explaining what happened. We need more than that.”

The neighborhood had already rallied around a “greenway” behind Cloverdale Park that the city and state wanted to pave with a reconfigured ramp off M-14 at the Barton drive exit.

So it was no challenge to recall 15 neighbors to meet with Lawrence and Bailey on July 28, and demand to know how the unauthorized tree cutting had happened — and exactly what the city was going to do about it.

Bairley promised that the city will replace the cut trees with six-inch diameter ash and linden trees, fast growers that will grow two or three feet taller per year than the ones that were there.

Knight said the replanting will “make the park look like a park, instead of a vacant lot.”

“This will be more parklike landscaping, easy to maintain and perhaps not become a security issue in the future, which was the intent of the whole operation,” he said.

“Security is paramount, you want to be able to see the playground from many angles, even in the darkness. We weighed all the hows and whys, and what would be best, and chose to do what we felt was the right thing, in the interest of security and park improvement.”

“I use that park quite a bit myself. Sometimes to improve things, to come in with a new landscape theme, you have to start anew. It’s hard to start anew, but ultimately it will have a much nicer look.”

Despite the dustup over the tree cutting, Blake calls the neighborhood “a delightful place to live.”

“We recognize each other, we work together, and are concerned about trees, the greenway, safety, and general upkeep. We actually look out for each other’s animals.”

“We are politically active. We are working people. We are concerned, and we vote, I’m thinking what’s best for Arbor and I think that’s also what’s best for our neighborhood.”

The new trees and grass are scheduled to go into the park this fall.

Reporter Rob Hoffman covers Ann Arbor city government. He can be reached at (734) 994-6864; e-mail at rhoffman@aa-news.com.

Continued from D1

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