



Town of La Conner

The Hedlin Deal

From: Mayor Ramon Hayes

In approximately the summer of 2019 the Town of La Conner was approached by members of the Hedlin Family with an offer to buy the 80,000 sq. ft. parcel of land on Maple Ave. known as the Hedlin Ballfield, which the Town had leased from the family for decades. This offer would allow the Hedlins to finance the purchase of another farm property increasing their farm holdings. After looking at the deal, the council declined the offer as it was not financially feasible for the Town. Grants were researched, but grants for land purchases are difficult to come by. Fearing that the entire property could be sold and developed, the town's administration came up with a plan to put a deal with the council back on the table.

The council agreed to move forward, and the Hedlins also agreed.

The idea was to isolate a minimum of 20,000 sq. ft. as a park, and the remaining 60,000 sq. ft would be sold for development. After analysis by the Hedlin family and the Town, a purchase price of \$625,000 was established. To support this number, the Town obtained an appraisal of the land, which came in at \$700,000. It would take time for the town to position the property for sale, so it purchased a one-year "option" to buy the property with the ability to purchase a second-year option if more time were needed. The option payments, each \$37,000, reflected the yearly interest payments the Hedlin family would pay until they gathered the necessary funds to pay off the note they incurred to purchase the additional farmland. Adding the option payments and the purchase price, the Town's maximum responsibility to the Hedlin's equaled \$699,000. For technical purposes, the first option payment was wrapped into the original sales price of \$625,000 for a total of \$662,000.

More recently, the Town was able to sell the property to a home builder for \$800,000. The buyer committed to building 10 single family homes ranging in size from 1,200 to 1,700 sq. ft. The square footage requirement was put in place to target the moderate home pricing segment and came about only after significant public input.

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With the sale, the Town of La Conner was made financially whole and retained 24,000 sq. ft. of raw land that will eventually be developed into a park as funds become available.

Making a “profit” on the sale of the Hedlin land was never a goal. After all costs and commitments, the Town realized a surplus of approximately \$8,064.27. These funds are required to be treated as “public funds” by state law.

It should be noted that in the fall of 2020, a citizen’s group arose with the objective of saving the entire property as a park. This group of dedicated citizens thoroughly researched options, but no new viable alternatives emerged.

As your mayor, I recognize this has been a difficult process for some in the community, especially those who grew up utilizing the Hedlin Ballfield. We should all be grateful, however, to the Hedlin family and to the Town Council who acted boldly, preserving a portion of land to be utilized as a town-owned park space.