

THE ACQUISITION OF STEPHENS LAKE PARK: A CASE STUDY

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A Thesis Proposal  
presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
University of Missouri-Columbia

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

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by  
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SPRING 2012

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

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A CASE STUDY

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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## **Acknowledgements**

Dedicated to my amazing wife and three wonderful children.

## **Abstract**

It was a daunting task that faced the CARE Committee, City officials, the grass-roots Coalition to Save Stephens Lake, and Stephens College. They had to unite the citizens of Columbia to raise \$10 million to purchase a property that was not on any park master plan or green space preservation plan with little time to do it, and no existing funding source.

A plan to save Stephens College was devised by the College and it involved selling a property that was beloved to many of the citizens of Columbia. To many, the parcel represented the last large property close to downtown that could serve as a central park for the City. There was a contingent of opposition groups and a well organized Coalition to Save Stephens Lake who all worked to lobby City Council members to do what they perceived to be the right thing for Columbia. The Trust for Public Land was brought in and they performed an appraisal of the property and a survey of the citizens, to determine what kind of funding source would be acceptable.

There was much criticism about how rushed the process was and how the deals appeared to be made without public involvement, but after the appraisal came in and a \$7 million price tag was set, it was agreed that the citizens of Columbia would have the opportunity to determine if they wanted to buy the Stephens Lake property. Experienced leadership guided the process past every road block, and in the end the citizens of Columbia voted to purchase the property that is now Stephens Lake Park.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Introduction

A lady and her daughter are walking down Old 63 toward the Broadway intersection, in front of the strip mall wrapping around the intersection on the northeast corner. The lady tells the girl that when she was younger, she used to swim in Stephens Lake. The girl asks her how she used to swim there when there is nothing but buildings and parking lots. She replies that when she was a student at Stephens College there was a beautiful golf course and swimming lake where the citizens of Columbia would play all summer long. The little girl is confused because to her it looks like any other shopping area in town with student housing apartments behind. There is no lake or grassy open space.

This discussion never took place because the citizens of Columbia successfully lobbied for the City of Columbia to purchase the property from Stephens College and turn it into Stephens Lake Park. On November 7, 2000, the citizens of Columbia passed a 1/4 % dedicated park sales tax to fund the purchase of the property, and as a result, on just about any day of the year there are hundreds of people enjoying the trails, swimming lake, open space, shelters and playgrounds that currently make up the park.

The case study of Stephens Lake Park offers a glimpse into the park acquisition and development process. Very seldom does a municipal parks and recreation department have an opportunity to purchase a large property near downtown and have \$2.5 million to



develop it immediately after purchase. This situation was particularly unique because the acquisition was not on any long term park master plan or city green space acquisition plan. The citizens of Columbia, Missouri formed a Coalition to Save Stephens Lake group and successfully lobbied the City Council to propose a ballot issue to purchase and develop the proposed park within five years. It has been a little over ten years since the idea for turning Stephens Lake and Golf Course into a community park was proposed. Now that the park is completely developed and actively used, it serves as a model for how citizens can unite behind a common goal and successfully lobby for the acquisition of a park with little time and no existing funding source.

The framework for this research paper consists of a thorough review of the historical documents pertinent to the City of Columbia's acquisition of the property. The historical documents were utilized to determine who the key participants were, so they could be interviewed. The historical document review consists of newspaper articles and City Council Minutes from before the park was purchased, when the idea was first proposed for the city to acquire the land, until after the ballot issue was successfully passed. Research covers the timeline of the events, various options for acquisition, who the key proponents and dissidents of the dedicated park sales tax were, and the process that occurred for the City of Columbia to purchase Stephens Lake Park. Following the historical document review, interviews were conducted with several of the key people involved with the process.

### Need

The purpose of this study is to share the knowledge of events and personal experiences that made the acquisition of Stephens Lake Park possible. Key elements (people, events and procedures) that came together and were vital to the passage of this ballot issue were identified. Quality case studies take a complex issue and present the data in an accessible manner that allows readers to apply the experience to their own circumstances (The Case Study as a Research Method, 1997). This research will be available to other municipalities or groups of people who might be able to utilize similar techniques in their own civic challenge. Because this is a unique situation, beyond the normal park acquisition process, given the time constraints and political climate, there may be information gleaned from this case study that could benefit other municipalities or grass roots organizations that may learn from this process.

### Research Questions

There are two main questions this research will attempt to answer: 1) What type of people were critical to make a major park acquisition possible? and 2) What process did the proponents for acquisition of the Stephens Lake property go through to get the city to acquire the property? Research intent was to summarize how a group of citizens affected change in their community.

### Delimitations

The researcher reviewed Columbia newspaper articles and official minutes from Columbia City Council meetings from February 15, 1999 (the first article found pertaining to the city acquiring the property) to passage of the ballot issue on Nov. 7, 2000. Interview requests were limited to those deemed important to the study based on the review of these historical documents. People who were actively involved in lobbying the City Council, representatives of the involved organizations, several members of the City Council, and persons who actively opposed the acquisition were deemed important to the study and were asked for an interview. The researcher did not interview all City Council members or all people named in the newspaper articles pertaining to the Stephens Lake Park ballot issue. Research was focused on those who could provide the richest data pertaining to this process.

### Limitations

Research was limited to a single case and community in the Midwestern United States. The number of people interviewed was limited based on significance of an individual's contribution to the park acquisition, willingness of participants and time constraints. Research was limited by the amount of interviewees that could be processed and analyzed in the limited time available. The researcher has served as the Senior Parks Planner for the City of Columbia for the past 12 years. In this capacity, he has had unique access to information, personal experience and knowledge of the particular case being studied, but his involvement in this case and his position with the City of Columbia

may have had and impact on the types of questions asked and the responses of interviewees.

### Assumptions

It was assumed that the acquisition of the property by the city was a positive achievement for the people who accomplished it and for the city as a whole. Part of the challenge to the researcher was to harness his own bias as a Park Planner for the City of Columbia and keep an open mind when interviewing those who opposed the acquisition. Although it was assumed that the acquisition was a positive event for the City of Columbia, the researcher was hoping to involve dissidents in his interviews in order to learn from their valuable perspective. It was challenging to get those who did participate in interviews to feel comfortable, honest and open about their roles. One way the researcher attempted to prevent his bias from interfering with the data collected was to ensure that the transcriptions from the interviews were verbatim, and that fair context was used in writing so that the research findings were truly in their own words and accurately represented.

## Definitions

The following terms are defined as they pertain to this study:

Case Study: A method of research where the researcher strives for a holistic understanding of a single event, setting, subject or group of documents (Bogdan & Biklen 1998). Case studies typically examine one or two issues in depth to try to understand how the system or process functions (Tellis 1997).

The Coalition to Save Stephens Lake: A not- for-profit organization formed in April 2000 with the intention of preserving the Stephens Lake property for future generations (Miletello, August 8, 2000). Mike Sleadd and Barbara Hoppe were the co-founders of the organization.

Enabling legislation: Legislation that gives appropriate officials the authority to implement or enforce the law (Thefreedictionary.com).

Qualitative Research: A method of inquiry that attempts to study phenomena in their natural environment. It involves an attempt to understand how people give meaning to human behavior. Qualitative research usually involves limited samples or a single case being studied. The goal is to gather in-depth knowledge of a single case rather than limited quantitative data from multiple sources. Data collecting methods may include case study, interviews, historical document study, personal experience, and observation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). According to Bogdan & Biklen (1998), "Qualitative Research is descriptive. The data collected take the form of words or pictures rather than numbers" (p. 5).

Stephens College: A liberal arts college located in Columbia, MO that was founded in 1833 (Stephens College history online, 2011).

Stephens Lake Park: A 116 acre municipal park located at 2001 East Broadway with a variety of amenities, including a swimming and fishing lake, amphitheater, walking trails, shelters, restrooms, play fields, waterfalls and playgrounds (online history of Stephens Lake Park).

Triangulation: When multiple data sources or different types of data confirm the same conclusion. Triangulation can be used in case study research to confirm validity (Tellis 1997).

The Trust for Public Land: A national, nonprofit land conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, community gardens, historic sites, rural lands, and other natural places, ensuring livable communities for generations to come (The Trust for Public Land website).

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

In order to situate the ballot issue and the city's acquisition of Stephens Lake Park within a Parks and Recreation framework, research was conducted in three main areas: 1) Funding methods of historical importance to this particular case study, 2) Case study as a research method, and 3) Phenomenology as it relates to case study research. Literature review in these areas helped provide context for how the research was conducted and how the researcher sought to describe how a group of citizens affected change in their community.

### Pertinent Funding and Taxation Issues

Prior to the 2000 ballot issue to purchase and develop Stephens Lake Park, much of the funding municipalities in the State of Missouri utilized for acquiring properties came from the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in the form of matching grants. The LWCF Act of 1965 was enacted to provide federal, state and local funding for outdoor recreation land acquisition. LWCF has been the primary funding mechanism for the National Parks Service, US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and US Fish and Wildlife Service since its inception. A portion of the funds each year are allocated to state and local governments. The total amount allocated and the amount allocated to the state and local governments varies every year. In Fiscal

year 2001, LWCF funding reached its highest level of funding at \$1 billion. In the 40+ years from 1965 to 2006, about \$14.3 billion has been appropriated, 28% of that going to state and local projects. In the fiscal year 2002, Missouri received an apportionment of over \$2.6 million. The allocation for Missouri decreased to about \$700,000 in fiscal year 2010 (National Park Service online). From 1965 to 2005, over 40,000 matching grants were funded at the state and local levels for acquisition of land or development of outdoor recreation facilities (CRS Report for Congress). In 1975, the City of Columbia used a 50% LWCF matching grant to purchase approximately 200 acres that became the Grindstone Nature Area for \$425,000.00 (City of Columbia Parks and Recreation online history of Grindstone Nature Area). Early in the program, more money was dedicated to state and local programs than the federal agencies; however, since the early 1980's, state appropriations began declining. During the Clinton administration, from 1996-1999, the state and local programs received virtually no funding from LWCF. During the fiscal years of 2006-2007, the Bush Administration requested no funding for state and local grants on the basis that other funding sources were available for state and local land acquisition, and it was hard to justify state grants when the federal government was increasing deficit spending every year (CRS Report for Congress).

When LWCF funding became unreliable, municipal governments looked for other sources of funding. In 1995, Missouri House Bill 88, sponsored by Daniel J. Hegeman of Cosby, MO, amended Sections 644.032-644.033 of Missouri law to allow municipal sales taxes to be dedicated to parks (Missouri House of Representatives online). Currently, Missouri law authorizes municipalities to levy certain specifically defined sales taxes if approved by a majority of their citizens (Sheets, 2006). The six types of



sales taxes available are: general revenue, economic development, capital improvements, transportation, storm water/parks and fire protection. Missouri Statute Sections 644.032-644.033 RSMo states that a municipality may utilize a sales tax, not to exceed one half of one percent, for storm water control, parks or both (Sheets, 2006). These state statutes served as the enabling legislation for the City of Columbia to propose the ballot issue funding the purchase, development and maintenance of Stephens Lake Park. On December 4, 2000, the City Council passed Ordinance number 16686, Council Bill number B 383-00 placing a ballot initiative on the November 7, 2000 election. The ballot issue asked the voters of the City of Columbia, MO if they wanted to support a 1/4 cent sales tax for a period of five years and a 1/8 cent sales tax thereafter with the dedicated purpose of purchasing, improving and managing Stephens Lake Park (City of Columbia Ordinances online). The issue required a simple majority of eligible voters to pass.

Dedicated sales taxes such as the one proposed to purchase the Stephens Lake property have many advantages, but they can also have disadvantages. Today, eighty percent of the citizens of the United States have access to an initiative or referendum process at either the state or local level, and this type of citizen legislation continues to grow as a portion of mandated funds by government at the state and local levels. Nowhere in the country are there more examples of direct democracy than in California where fully one third of the states budget is accounted for by voter mandates (Matsusaka 2010).

Matsusaka (2010) states,

An important purpose of the initiative and referendum is to constrain government officials, but this can be taken too far: By dedicating large amounts of spending to

particular programs while at the same time restricting tax increases, initiatives may restrict the choices of legislators to such a degree that it is virtually impossible to balance the budget...” (p 324)

Depending on one's perspective, restricting how government can spend money can be viewed as a positive or negative situation. California has had the ability to pass initiatives and referendums for almost 100 years (since 1912). The City of Columbia has only had this option for fifteen years (pertaining to parks) and as such has not had as great a portion of available funds dedicated for specific purposes. It is evident that if 1/3 of the total city budget were dedicated to specific projects, the flexibility of elected city officials and city staff would be greatly limited. Given that the state, county and cities all compete for the available sales tax revenues available, and assuming that there is a threshold of sales tax that citizens will not tolerate exceeding, it is easy to see how ballot initiatives at both the state and local level can affect each other.

The City of Columbia was limited in the funding choices available to purchase the Stephens Lake property with the most likely choice being a park and storm water sales tax in some form.

### Case Study as a Research Method

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), case studies and qualitative research have been important research methods in the social sciences for many decades. Case studies are an effective method of reviewing historical data, assessing the key

components and deciding what information has the most potential to pursue further (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Case studies can either be exploratory, explanatory or descriptive in nature (Tellis 1997). In an exploratory case study, data collection may begin prior to hypothesis development. The researcher may begin with pilot studies, prior to having a fully designed research plan, to see what direction the research will go (Tellis, 1997). Explanatory case studies can be utilized for causal studies. Descriptive case studies generate a descriptive theory, form hypotheses and test cause-effect relationships (Tellis, 1997).

Case study research strives for a holistic understanding of a single event, setting, subject or group of documents (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Case studies typically examine one or two issues in depth to try to understand how the system or process functions (Tellis, 1997). Triangulation can be used in case study research to confirm validity. This can be done by utilizing multiple data sources or different types of data (Tellis, 1997). For example, a case study that quotes interviewees as stating that an event occurred can be corroborated by researching newspaper articles that confirm that the event occurred. Such practices contribute validity to a case study.

The researcher reviewed all of the local newspaper articles and official Columbia City Council minutes that pertained to the 2000 park sales tax ballot issue and the acquisition of Stephens Lake Park from Stephens College. Historical documents were reviewed from February 15, 1999 (the first article found pertaining to the city acquiring the property) to passage of the ballot issue on Nov. 7, 2000. Based on this document review, the researcher identified the key people involved, and requested to interview them about their involvement with the city acquisition of Stephens Lake Park and the

ballot issue that led to the funding of the acquisition. This combination of document review and interviews is common in case study research methodology (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In case study research, it is common for some subjects to have more experience, better insight or greater willingness to participate. The researcher does not have to worry about spending more time with one source than another, as some sources of data are more plentiful than others (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Context is critical in telling case study stories. Flyvbjerg (2006) states that the case study is best suited to produce “concrete, context-dependent knowledge” (p. 223).

Case studies are one method of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). Often researchers proposing qualitative studies have a difficult time describing what their research will be, because they do not know what they will find as the research develops. This often leads to changes in literature review and discussion of methods while research is ongoing (Bogdan & Biklen 1998).

The Acquisition of Stephens Lake Park is best described as an exploratory case study method of research.

### Phenomenology

To add depth to the historical document review pertaining to the Stephens Lake ballot issue and acquisition, the researcher not only did a thorough review of all the newspaper articles and City Council meeting minutes pertaining to the event, but also captured the human experience of the people involved with the process. While reviewing the articles, it became apparent that approximately 10 names came up repeatedly as the

individuals who could best tell the story of how a group of citizens successfully lobbied the City Council to propose a ballot issue to fund the purchase of a nostalgic and emotionally important property to many Columbians.

According to Bogdan and Biklen, “most qualitative researchers reflect some sort of phenomenological perspective” (1998, p. 22). A phenomenological approach is the most logical approach for research that involves a few representatives telling the story of many. Phenomenology is defined as the study of anything that appears or presents itself to someone (Peet, 1998).

According to Johnston & Sidaway (2004), "Phenomenology's basic aim is to present an alternative methodology to the hypothesis-testing and theory-building of positivism" (p.201). Life is more than efficiency in models: it is experience. There is no objective world independent of human experience (Seamon 2000).

Phenomenology "involves the description of things as one experiences them" (Peet, 1998, p. 37). Experience can involve the five senses, but it can also involve belief, excitement, imagination, or physical contact with an object.

Every individual's experience shapes a distinct world view, and this world view, in turn, shapes the conscious meanings and intentionality toward the rest of the world. Intentionality, as defined by phenomenologists, asserts that each individual is the focus of their own world, whether they are aware of it or not. The world is as they experience it. Phenomenology is neither subjective nor objective.

Phenomenology tries "to encounter, rather than master, the object to be known" (Buttimer, 1976, p. 282). "Whereas the subjective mode concentrates on unique individual experience, and the objective seeks generalization and testable propositions

concerning aggregate human experience...the phenomenological mode tries to dialogue between the individual and their experience of their world" (Buttimer, 1976, p. 282).

David Seamon (2000) has conducted research on how phenomenology can be used as a planning mechanism. Seamon (2000) proposed two basic assumptions: (1) You cannot separate the person from the world: the world is dynamic, affecting the person as much as the person affects the world; and (2) phenomenology is radical empiricism. Not empirical in the positivist sense, but empirical in the sense that it is firsthand direct contact with the phenomena. If researchers are studying a community, they must first become a part of the community, literally immersed in it, before they can describe its specific characteristics and qualities. In existential phenomenological research, the immersed researcher gathers descriptive accounts from respondents who have experience with the phenomena being studied. They then look for commonalities from the respondents, and share the findings with the involved respondents to verify results. The main assumption of this approach is that people in a community or culture share a consistent experience (Seamon, 2000). Seamon stated that phenomenology can help bridge the gap between the practitioner's intuitive approach (feeling) and the academic's intellectual approach (thinking) by providing a common language that addresses both the firsthand lived experience and the secondhand accounts of the experience. As the Senior Parks Planner for the City of Columbia from 1999 until the present, the researcher has been immersed in the Stephens Lake Park project and the community of Columbia for the past thirteen years.

Seamon (2000) described the existential phenomenologist as one who is more concerned with the experiences of real people in real places. Phenomenology is a

descriptive science; however, the ultimate goal is to use the descriptions to identify commonalities that can be used to understand how the phenomena affect the experiences of humans. Seamon (2000) researches why places are important for people and how design can be an instrument for place making.

Phenomenology's impact on design has been to emphasize human experience as it relates to the environment. Phenomenology challenges a designer to examine his own experience and to become a subject, rather than an object, in the research.

Phenomenology allows designers to look at complex issues such as well being, value and creativity in everyday life--all beyond the terms set forth by rationalists.

Phenomenologists are trying to reconcile heart and mind, knowledge and action, all the while challenging positivist science. There is value to subjective reality.

Rationalism ignores the language of poets and philosophers, which can "shed light on the complexities of man's relationship to the earth" (Buttimer 1976, p. 277).

Scholars face the task of bringing "our ways of knowing into closer harmony with our ways of being in the world" to give meaning to research (Buttimer, 1976, p. 278).

Buttimer (1976) critiques positivist science as reducing everything to a dualism of subjectivity or objectivity in empirical research. Buttimer (1976) admits that phenomenology does not "offer clear operational procedures to guide the empirical investigator" (p. 278). It is an artistic and descriptive process that is similar to real life. Buttimer (1976) states that space is not just the measurable geometry that exists outside of people; it is, most importantly, where we live, socialize, and experience life.

Interviewing involved participants, having their stories told in their own words rather than collecting numerical data, and having been a part of the acquisition, design

and development process of what would become Stephens Lake Park inherently makes this research phenomenological in nature. Heppner and Heppner (2004) describe writing a thesis as artistic in nature and inseparable from the researcher's experience (p. 305).



## Chapter 3: Methods

### Introduction

Historical document research was utilized to make decisions about how and with whom to conduct interviews. The research of historical documents, newspaper articles and City Council minutes from the appropriate time frame is presented as a time line of events. The historical document research was utilized to determine the appropriate methodology (the case study) for this research. This research utilized a qualitative and exploratory approach to case study research. There is a greater potential for “rich information” when respondents are allowed to offer their insights in an unguided and unbiased setting (Knap and Propst, 2001). The use of open-ended interview questions allowed respondents to reply in an unguided manner.

### Selection of Participants

Through preliminary research of newspaper articles, many individuals were found to have played prominent roles in the passage of the sales tax. They were deemed likely interview candidates, and included; the former Mayor of Columbia, Darwin Hindman; former City Councilman Chris Janku; former City Councilwoman Almeta Crayton; Parks and Recreation Director Mike Hood; Mike Moore, Project Manager for the Trust for Public Land; the founders of the Coalition to Save Stephens Lake, Barbara Hoppe and Michael Sleadd; and some of the organized opposition to the park acquisition, including Fred Parry, Fred Springsteel, and William Samuels. The researcher was aware that the

list of potential interviewees might change as the document review and interviews progressed.

### Interview Process

The author was the sole interviewer so as to limit confusion that can occur with multiple interviewers who may have varying styles of communication and note-taking. The researcher contacted the individual subjects by phone in advance to request personal interviews. Interview time and place was set at the convenience of the interviewee. The researcher's goal was to have the interviews completed by spring, 2011. The researcher provided in advance of each interview, the questions to be asked and a general timeline of events to each interviewee. The intent of providing the timeline was to serve as a refresher of the general facts of the case study, because it has been over ten years since passage of the ballot issue. The questions in advance allowed the respondents to reflect on their role and the roles of others involved with the ballot issue negotiations. The researcher hoped that advance consideration of the issues would elicit more stories that would shed light on the key players in the negotiation and acquisition of Stephens Lake Park. Intentionally, the researcher hoped that providing the questions in advance would prevent participants, particularly those who were adversarial to the passage of the sales tax, from feeling uncomfortable or worried about trick questions. It was very important to gain the trust of interviewees. The narrative at the beginning of the questionnaire was honest about the potential public accessibility of research papers, but also explained that the researcher was solely interested in attaining insightful data from uninhibited

respondents and would make every effort to include appropriate context and complete responses so that all information would be presented fairly. See Appendix A for the entire interview form. Due to time constraints and lack of response from some potential participants, the researcher was limited to three participants who agreed to an interview.

### Research Design

The researcher's goal was to determine what roles key people played in the passage of the ballot issue to fund Stephens Lake Park and what the process was for this to occur. In order to arrive at this information, the author conducted a thorough review of all the local newspaper articles, City Council minutes, and local periodicals that wrote articles relevant to the Stephens Lake property during the time frame studied. This information was the basis for deciding who should be interviewed to expand upon the publicly available knowledge. The researcher requested interviews with approximately ten people involved with the process. Questions were asked pertaining to the political process of the ballot issue, discussion leading up to it, lobbying for or against it, and key events that occurred to make the whole process possible. The interviews were semi-structured with a list of general questions that the researcher wanted all participants to address; however, respondents were encouraged to add any interesting stories about issues they thought played an important role in the ballot issue passing.

Although potentially rich information would be obtained, the opposite was also possible, as respondents might have replied to the open-ended questions with short, simple answers. When this situation presented itself, the researcher was prepared with

follow-up questions that drew out further information without leading the respondent. A neutral statement such as, “Could you expand upon that thought?” was utilized by the researcher. It was very important to allow the respondents plenty of time to answer to ensure that they were thinking through what was being asked and responding thoughtfully (Bogdan & Biklen 1998). The interview questions were purposely open-ended so as not to be leading.

Phenomenological psychologists have established a clear set of procedures for existential phenomenological research. According to Seamon (2000) they are:

(1) identifying the phenomenon in which the phenomenologist is interested; (2) gathering descriptive accounts from respondents regarding their experience of the phenomenon; (3) carefully studying the respondents' accounts with the aim of identifying any underlying commonalities and patterns; and (4) presenting results, both to the study respondents (in the form of a “debriefing” about the study in ordinary language) and to fellow researchers (in the form of scholarly presentation). (p. 9)

In keeping with a phenomenological approach, the researcher shared the transcripts with the interviewees to verify that what was recorded is what was intended. Due to time limitations, the researcher had to limit the comment period for the interviewees to one week so that data analysis could begin on the transcribed data.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The interviews were digitally recorded with the consent of the interviewees. Following each interview, the interview sessions were transcribed verbatim. Conceptual categories of key events were created where the researcher found similar answers to questions. A narrative summary that best characterizes the categories was created, consisting of the major concepts that developed as well as representative quotes from the respondents.

The original intent of the research was to use the Knap and Propst (2001) methodology where each category that became evident would be summarized. In each summary, the author would note the frequency of references to that category, stating specific quotes with the relevant accompanying demographic data of the person quoted, while also indicating whether the quotes represented a favorable or negative response to the theme. Because there were limited participants and tallying favorable or negative responses to arrive at quantitative data seemed irrelevant, the research relied heavily on the insight of the interviewees. Prior to beginning the interviews, it was assumed that the largest portion of the data would be narrative and the qualitative analysis would follow a phenomenological approach utilizing much of the language of the participants.

Research of this type is rich in detail and insight; respondents gave their responses solely based on their own past experiences, not having been forced to choose from a list of preconceived answers as is the case with many quantitative studies. Also important is that the author was able to ask follow-up questions to get at in-depth detail (Knap and Propst, 2001). Knap, in 1999, tested the reliability of her focus group qualitative

interview process against traditional survey methods and found them to be just as reliable with much greater detail (Knap and Propst, 2001).

## Chapter 4: Research Findings

### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine the events and personal experiences that made the acquisition of Stephens Lake Park possible. Other municipalities or groups will be able to learn from this case study to assist them in their own civic challenge.

A review of the newspaper articles, City Council minutes and other relevant local periodicals allowed the researcher to develop a general time line for the events that occurred to establish what issues were important and who the key participants were. This data guided the research interview questions, allowing the researcher to gain more detailed information that was not otherwise publicly available. The key events and issues were determined as follows:

A Daunting Task

A Plan to Save Stephens College

Competing Ideas

The Organized Opposition

The Key Proponents

The Trust for Public Land

Formation of the CARE Committee

Establishing a Price for the Property Acceptable to Both Parties

The Appraisal

Criticism of the Process

Open Houses Allowed and Water Quality Testing

The Various Options for Development

The Sales Tax Passes

Voter Buy-in

The Value of Experienced Leadership

Columbia is a Unique Situation

### A Time Line of Events

Stephens College, a small liberal arts college in Columbia, MO, had owned and managed the 111 acre property known as "Stephens Lake" since 1926 (online history of Stephens Lake Park). The lake area and nine-hole golf course were open to the public on an annual membership basis until December of 1998, when the college decided to close the facilities (Gaarder, Feb. 15, 1999). At the December 7, 1998 City Council Meeting, City Manager Ray Beck reported that he had been in discussion with the college for several months regarding the City Parks and Recreation department taking over the operation of the golf course in some capacity. The Council directed Mr. Beck to continue discussions with the college pertaining to future use of the golf course as well as the lake and other land (City Council minutes December 7, 1998).

Columbia Mayor Darwin Hindman expressed his concerns for the college as follows: "Of course we all knew that Stephens College was having some very difficult financial times, and all of us had been wondering what the fate of Stephens Lake was going to be" (personal communication, March 25, 2011).



The Coalition to Save Stephens Lake was established in April 2000 with the intention of preserving the Stephens Lake property for future generations (Miletello, August 8, 2000). An article that ran in the Columbia Daily Tribune, a local newspaper, on May 30, 2000 stated that Stephens College was developing plans for the property that included commercial, office and high density housing as opposed to the current single family residential zoning (McLaughlin). The same article (McLaughlin) stated that the Coalition to Save Stephens Lake was formed in response to the Stephens Board of Trustees move to sell the property in order to “boost its endowment.” Stephens College, through the representation of their attorney Craig Van Matre, set the date of Nov. 8, 2000, the day after the upcoming November 7 election, for the city to have the right to purchase the property (McLaughlin May 30, 2000). If the city failed to act by that date, the property would be sold for development. McLaughlin reported that the Columbia City Council decided to propose a permanent park sales tax to buy the lake property at a work session on July 27, 2000 (July 28, 2000). With little time to spare, the City Council decided to introduce a 1/4 cent sales tax proposal on August 7, 2000, allowing for public comment on August 21 so that the ballot issue could meet the County Clerk's deadline of August 29 to place the issue on the November ballot (McLaughlin July 28, 2000). McLaughlin, in her July 28, 2000 article, reported that the Trust for Public Land was leading negotiations for the city to secure the lake property for public use. An independent appraisal was requested and the property was valued at \$7 million, \$3 million less than the asking price of \$10 million. The appraisal was released to the public on October 9, 2000, less than one month prior to the public voting on the ballot issue (Shugart, October 9, 2000). The Council finalized the ballot issue to be a 1/4 cent sales tax for five years,

reverting to a permanent 1/8 cent sales tax after five years. On October 16, 2000, the City Council passed a council bill authorizing the city manager to execute a Memorandum of Understanding for the lease/purchase of the Stephens Lake property (City of Columbia Council Bill R 211-00) contingent upon the passage of Proposition 1 on November 7, 2000.

The proposed ballot language as proposed by Mayor Darwin Hindman read as follows:

Shall the City of Columbia, Missouri impose a sales tax of 1/4 of 1% for five years and 1/8 of 1% thereafter for the purpose of providing funding for local parks in order to purchase, improve, and manage parks, trails and natural lands for water quality, wildlife, tree preservation, and recreation purposes? All expenditures will be subject to an annual public audit. Revenue from this tax would be used to purchase, improve and manage the Stephens Lake property and for other park purposes. (City Council Minutes, Aug. 21, 2000)

### A Daunting Task

Imagine the daunting task of needing to come up with \$10 million dollars in less than one year to buy land for a municipality that already had 1980 acres of park land (McLaughlin August 6, 2000), no funding source available, and the property in question was not part of any park master plan or green space preservation plan. "The Stephens Lake property was not on any park or open space master plan and being on a master plan is always useful in selling to the public" (D. Hindman, personal communication, March 25, 2011).

City Manager Ray Beck, at the August 21 City Council Meeting, stated that there was no general fund money available to purchase the Stephens Lake Property (Bills August 22, 2000). In addition to the purchase of Stephens Lake Park, the Council decided to add funding to the ballot issue for ongoing maintenance of the entire city parks system. Leader of the grass-roots effort, Barbara Hoppe, was concerned that the additional 1/8 % permanent tax to fund ongoing park maintenance would burden the 1/8% dedicated to the purchase of Stephens Lake Park (personal communication, April 3, 2011).

Hoppe expressed her concern about the limited funds: "After we spoke to the council and talked to the council members, I realized that the city was chasing retail dollars just to keep up with basic city needs and that there wasn't any pot of money there for other things (B. Hoppe, personal communication, April 3, 2011).

Mayor Hindman stated, "We had gone to the public, basically, to get the money to build the ARC (Activity and Recreation Center) not long before...and it had passed by a very narrow margin, by something like 175 votes...and so being faced with the Stephens College [property]...was...an awesome thought" (personal communication, March 25, 2011). Hindman indicated his initial skepticism: "As mayor, I thought this couldn't pass on a city-wide basis, because we don't have the money to do that, [we] barely made it with the ARC, and now we go back and ask for it [Stephens Lake]". Hindman considered options, wondering, "'Can we lease it...or-- what are the options--would Stephens give it to us?' Anything to avoid having an election, because it looked like it might really be a [tough election]" (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

In order for the city to acquire the Stephens Lake property, the city would have to meet strict deadlines. If any were missed, the whole process could be halted and the buying opportunity lost. At the May 15, 2000 City Council Meeting, City Manager Ray Beck stated that he had received a letter from an attorney representing Stephens College that outlined a process for the sale of the approximately 111 acre Stephens Lake Property to the city. The letter offered the city first right of refusal of the property, at a price to be determined, until November 8, 2000, the day after an election on November 7. The college was recommending that the city fund the acquisition with some sort of ballot initiative (City Council Minutes May 15, 2000). Mr. Beck went on to state that if the city were to meet this deadline, they would have to have an ordinance clarifying a funding mechanism by August 7, 2000 and passed by August 21 in order to have a ballot issue on the November 7 ballot. Mr. Beck stated that he and Mayor Hindman had been meeting with representatives of Stephens College to discuss how a purchase might be funded, but that no agreements had been reached (City Council Minutes May 15, 2000). Several Council Members expressed concern over the short time frame for completing a deal.

Mayor Hindman stated that the short deadline for the city to make a decision allowed the opposition to throw out questions such as, "What's the condition of the dam?", that could not possibly be resolved in such a short time frame. "We just couldn't get the information ...so that gave them an opportunity to make charges that they knew we would be weak on the defense, because of the time limitation" (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

### A Plan to Save Stephens College

In 1997 Marcia Kurst, president of Stephens College, contacted attorney Craig Van Matre to discuss the serious financial situation that Stephens College was in and see if there was any way to sell assets to keep the college afloat. "The problem with Stephens Park...was that it was a money drain" (C. Van Matre, personal communication, June 18, 2011). Van Matre added that Stephens College was in a dire financial situation from years of deferred maintenance and lack of fund-raising from alumni.

Van Matre recalled his discussion with Kurst in which she stated that the college was operating at a deficit, needed to sell something, and wanted to know what would be the most marketable. Van Matre replied, "Well, without a doubt, Stephens Lake Park because you're looking at about 120 acres there...great infrastructure nearby, and you could do a multi-use development down there where you had commercial, office and residential and build it out over a period of five or six years." Van Matre added, "At that point in time, the town was growing, and it looked like there was plenty of opportunity to utilize that land. The land was zoned Residential, but there was high-density residential and commercial around it." Kurst suggested that there would likely be a lot of opposition (C. Van Matre, personal communication, June 18, 2011).

Van Matre replied,

Well, from the perspective of Stephens, you don't care who pays you money, as long as the money you get paid is equivalent to the value (of the land). So I had a couple of appraisers come out there. We got appraisals all the way from three million to ten million. So I chose to take the ten million dollar appraisal and sort of let it be known among the people in our town that we wanted to sell the

property and we thought it was worth ten million dollars. (personal communication, June 18, 2011)

Almost immediately, college faculty and city officials expressed interest in buying the land. Van Matre quoted the collective sentiment as, “Oh, we can’t let this jewel get away from us; it will be a disaster if this turns into some kind of development. We need the city to buy it” (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

Van Matre talked to several development financiers and there was very little interest in the property. He paraphrased their concerns, “You know, it’s probably only worth three or four million dollars to us because there’s a lot of land there but there’s a lot of risks associated with getting it resolved. It could be a three or four year process to get it resolved.” Developers were concerned about the potential controversy involved, lack of infrastructure, and permitting involving the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers to drain the lake. All of these issues would make the property difficult to develop. Developers wanted somebody else, or the college, to carve the property up into smaller parcels, get the zoning, and then sell it off in parcels suited for multi-family units or commercial uses (personal communication, June 18, 2011). Van Matre was disappointed in the lack of development interest in the property, but, "meantime, there was this groundswell of people that wanted to buy the park for the city. And so, we quickly realized that the best thing we could do was polish up that deal, make them think that we were hot to sell it to anybody, we were going to drain the lake and get this all done" (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

Van Matre summarized the plan he laid out to the Stephens College Board:

I said to the Stephens people, look, a lease payment from the city can be treated like a bond payment and will be tax exempt. So if I can get the city to pay four or five percent interest, in effect, on a lease payment, then what we'll do is we'll let the city have five years to build up money through this park tax that they can use to pay us, and they'll pay us rent. (personal communication, June 18, 2011)

In essence, the proposed deal would amount to over \$1million in rental payments and \$7 million in the outright purchase after five years of park sales tax accrual.

Van Matre added,

We wound up negotiating the lease so that the city was obligated to buy it at the end of five years. They had five years to raise the money. So I'm pretty sure we were able to sell the lease and the contract through a brokerage firm for almost eight million dollars...so the college got \$8 million...give or take. Christmas come early, pie in the sky was \$10 million. But \$7 ½ million was always the target. Anything better than \$7 ½ million was just great." (personal communication, June 18, 2011)

### Competing Ideas

There were many reasons why the timing and political climate was difficult for the City of Columbia to acquire Stephens Lake Park. In November of 1999, the city passed a 1/4 % sales tax for capital projects to fund the development of a Municipal Recreation Center (the ARC) and approved a \$20-million-plus property tax increase to fund the complete renovation of the public library (Rose 2000). Construction of the

Boone County Regional Library was scheduled to begin in August of 2000 (City Council Minutes June 19, 2000).

Hindman recollected,

That [the library] was highly controversial. Not as controversial as it got to be when they started—they hadn't started tearing down the old one. If they had, that might have doomed this. Because, you know, there was such a tremendous reaction to tearing down that old, sacred library building that people were just MAD." (personal communication, March 25, 2011)

Those opposed to the acquisition of Stephens Lake Park pitted the acquisition versus public safety, suggesting that city money would be better spent hiring more police officers. Hoppe stated that the Coalition to Save Stephens Lake talked with then candidate for City Council John Coffman to see if he supported the acquisition of the property. When they found out he was supportive of the acquisition, they threw the Coalition's support behind Coffman, tying the two causes together. Coffman's opponent at the time, Sid Sullivan, was running on a platform of public safety (more police officers), and so when Coffman won the Council seat for the 6th Ward, the Coalition was confident in their cause and their support on the Council was solidified (personal communication, April 3, 2011). Councilman Rex Campbell questioned the value of putting a joint city-county police tax issue on the November ballot because the amount of money it would generate would not be sufficient as proposed to meet the current needs, and he did not want a police tax to be pitted against a competing park sales tax on the same ballot (Shields, August 11, 2000). Both Councilmen Janku and Coffman stated that



the need to proceed with the park sales tax was urgent; there were other options for funding police and public safety and that if the park sales tax passed, there could be existing general fund money being spent on parks that could be freed up to help fund police needs (Shields, August 11, 2000). Columbia Daily Tribune editor Henry Waters (August 19, 2000) opined that the residents of Columbia were being well served by the current police force and that the city manager's plan to add 2-3 officers per year was a reasonable plan to keep up with public safety needs. Barbara Hoppe summed up the feeling of the Coalition well by saying,

I never saw the either/or situation. I think when the community has more parks, there's positive ways that families and kids and young people can spend their time, and that that's all part of the holistic package of creating a community that addresses crime in a variety of ways. (personal communication, April 3, 2011)

Mayor Hindman described the opposing viewpoint as follows:

Our priorities are wrong, and we need more police and more fire [fighters]. You know, public safety is always a high item in people's mind, so it's a fairly effective tactic. On our side, of course...[was the reality that] this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. "What are your grandchildren going to say when they look at this? If we don't take it now, it's gone forever"...was our strongest point. (personal communication, March 25, 2011)

At the October 16, 2000 Council Meeting, Councilman John noted that in August, he was led to believe that the passage of a parks sales tax would free up some of the

existing general fund money that is currently subsidizing parks to be available for other departments. He was disappointed that the Council had changed their minds and the current plan was to keep all the funding for Parks in addition to the proposed sales tax money (City Council Minutes Oct. 16, 2000). Councilman John mentioned several of the city departments that were lacking funding and that the city had just passed a 1/4% sales tax last year to fund the \$13 million city recreation center. Councilman Janku replied that over the next five years the city would be spending \$171 million on roads and various utilities. Janku added that Water and Light, Transportation and Sewer utilities all have dedicated funding sources and that the Police and Fire ballot issues had unfortunately failed when voted upon by the citizens of Columbia in the past few years (City Council Minutes Oct. 16, 2000). He stated that it is an unfair assessment to say that other city departments are neglected. Mayor Hindman added that the additional money for parks does not adversely affect other departments (City Council Minutes Oct. 16, 2000).

Discussion of competing properties for the city to purchase, namely the 500 acre Philips farm in southeast Columbia, were discussed as an alternative to the Stephens Lake property (McLaughlin July 28, 2000). The discussion hinged on whether the city would be better served by acquiring the 500+ acre Phillips tract of land instead of the Stephens Lake property. Hoppe stated that as part of the Trust for Public Land's survey, the citizens polled were asked if they would be more supportive of a proposed park sales tax if the anchor property were the Phillips tract instead of Stephens Lake, "but the survey turned out the way I expected" with Stephens Lake receiving more support than the Phillips tract (personal communication, April 3, 2011).

Another opposing point of view came from the anti-urban sprawl environmentalists who believed that the Stephens property represented one of the last opportunities for urban infill, high density, urban-type development close to downtown. Mayor Hindman feared that the base of people who would ordinarily support this type of preservation of open space might be split on this issue of urban sprawl (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

The combination of several tax issues having just passed for recreation purposes (The ARC and the library) and growing support for increased police and fire protection created an environment where local politicians were nervous about the chances of buying the lake property. In addition, some of their potential allies in this type of acquisition, environmental groups, had mixed ideas for how the property could best serve the city as it grew. This combination of events made the acquisition of the Stephens Lake property seem unlikely.

### The Organized Opposition

At the August 7, 2000 City Council meeting, Fred Parry, president of the Boone County Citizens for Good Government, recommended that the city work with Boone County officials to jointly pass a sales tax that would fund more police officers for the city and the county as well as fund the expansion of the county jail (City Council Minutes August 7, 2000). He proposed that the issue be placed on the November 7 ballot. Mayor Hindman responded that city staff was working with the county to determine whether a joint ballot issue was possible and how many officers would be needed for the city (City

Council Minutes August 7, 2000). Following the Council Meeting, Parry stated that his proposal for a law enforcement tax would not happen, because City Council Members did not want it to compete with the proposed parks sales tax (McLaughlin August 8, 2000).

Attorney William Samuels, Treasurer for Columbians Against Unfair Taxes said that they started fundraising the first week of October to start a campaign against Proposition 1. In the first week, they raised \$2000 (Bills, October 8, 2000). Samuels spoke before the City Council opposing funding the acquisition of Stephens Lake for several reasons. He stated that the tax would have no end and long after the property would be paid for, the tax would remain; therefore, it should actually be considered a general tax increase. Samuels stated that once a tax is in place, it never goes away. He argued that sales taxes are regressive, because they apply to necessities of life; therefore, sales tax unfairly affects middle class and low income people (City Council Minutes August 21, 2000). In a September 7, 2000 article in the Columbia Daily Tribune, Samuels suggested that the property and lake might be polluted from years of golf course chemicals and fertilizers and should be tested prior to the November 7 ballot issue. He insisted that Columbians should know for certain that they were not buying a polluted property. In response, Councilwoman Almeta Crayton said, “We’ve been swimming in it all of these years, and it ain’t killed nobody yet” (Shields, P. J. 2000, September 7 p. 12A). In a September 24, 2000 Columbia Daily Tribune article, Samuels emphasized his point that the proposed sales tax constituted a general revenue tax in disguise. He claimed that raising sales taxes on food to pay for parks is “evil” (Flory p. 1). Barbara Hoppe responded to Samuels by saying that if he really felt strongly about sales tax on food, he should lobby local government to change that, rather than fight against the

acquisition of Stephens Lake, but she suggested that was not their real motive (Flory, 2000 September 24).

In the September 23, 2000 Columbia Business Times, editor Fred Parry outlined many of his complaints about the city moving towards acquiring Stephens Lake. Parry said that the citizens committee appointed by the mayor was hand-picked to push through a tax increase and hide the potential problems associated with the acquisition until after the ballot issue had passed, similar to the community recreation center and Columbia Regional Library projects that had just recently passed. Parry listed the following items that he felt needed to be addressed prior to passage of any ballot issue:

- 1) Will we know the final selling price of Stephens Lake before the election?
- 2) What will happen to the sales tax revenue if a "reasonable" deal cannot be reached with Stephens College?
- 3) What are the anticipated costs for infrastructure needs on the Stephens Lake property (i.e. - restrooms, parking lots, golf course restoration, lighting, storm water management)?
- 4) How many additional city employees will need to be hired to maintain the Stephens Lake property?
- 5) If the purchase is approved by voters, how will the Stephens property be used?  
Will citizens have access to the golf course and lake for recreational purposes?  
Will swimming be allowed at the lake?
- 6) Will the Stephens Lake property be tested for environmental concerns before the November election? Is the lake currently in accordance with EPA regulations?

- 7) Will the meetings to negotiate a selling price with Stephens College be open to the public regardless of provisions in the open meetings law?
- 8) What are the specific plans for the funds freed up by the addition of the permanent parks tax? Will funds be made available for additional police officers?
- 9) Will operations at Stephens Lake be able to pay for themselves or will they need to be subsidized by the city?
- 10) Will any of the proceeds from the permanent parks tax be used to fund operations at the community recreation center?
- 11) What portion of the proceeds from the permanent parks tax will be used for future acquisitions of park land?

Parry stated that he believed there were higher priorities for the city (i.e. police and fire) and that the citizens of Columbia deserved answers to these questions before being asked to approve a sales tax. Parry added that questions brought up by himself, Fred Springsteel, Henry Lane and Bill Samuels are all too often dismissed by city leaders as the rantings of "crazy old men who are against everything".

Columbia libertarian Mitch Moore took out a full page add in the Red Page (advertisement weekly) on October 2, 2000 to argue against the acquisition of Stephens Lake. Moore noted that Fred Parry stated on a local radio show (KFRU) that he heard from a local developer that the college had attempted to sell the property within the last five years for less than \$2.5 million without any takers. Moore criticized the recent \$22 million "expansion" of the Columbia Regional Library and the \$11 million being spent for a gym and a pool (recreation center), and he further questioned the local newspaper's

ability to serve as a government watchdog when the editor, Hank Waters, is on the Board of Stephens College and has editorialized in favor of both the passage of the sales tax to fund the recreation center and the acquisition of Stephens Lake. Moore stated that Tribune editor Waters had an obligation to the citizens of Columbia to reveal that the college was unable to sell the property for \$2.5 million.

A Columbia Daily Tribune article from October 13, 2000 (Shugart) announced that a new group was formed to oppose the purchase of Stephens Lake. The Citizens for Higher Priorities, represented by Mike Flanagan, spoke out against the acquisition of the Stephens Property at a Chamber of Commerce meeting during discussion as to whether the Chamber should formally support or oppose the acquisition. Flanagan stated that the whole process of acquisition was flawed, the public did not have enough information to make an informed decision, and that a dedicated parks tax was just a general revenue tax in disguise, because money currently going to parks would just be shifted to general revenue, if the tax passed (Shugart, October 13, 2000). Flanagan is quoted (Shugart, October 14, 2000) from the Chamber of Commerce meeting as saying, "At what cost do we continue to aggressively acquire park or open space versus funding other priorities?" (p. 1).

Van Matre stated that while there were people opposed to the acquisition, they were not very well organized: "There were these people that, sort of the downtown Chamber of Commerce types, a little older, who just couldn't see how the city could afford it...there were things the city needed to spend money on instead...the streets and sewers and infrastructure, but there was not an organized opposition. It was disorganized. People sniping around" (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

### The Key Proponents

Friends of Stephens Lake was formed in 1997 by a group of citizens, most of whom were members of the swimming lake. The core leadership was comprised of Barbara Hoppe, Michael Slead and Barbara Reid (Gaarder 1999). The group was trying to get permission from Stephens College to increase membership at the lake so that it would be sustainable for the college. They were concerned that the college had given up on keeping the lake open and recruiting new membership (B. Hoppe, personal communication, April 3, 2011).

Mayor Hindman had personal experience with Stephens Lake as well. "I don't think they [Stephens College] ever invested in it in any significant way, so it never did really change. But it was just a wonderful place, and there were just lots of people whom you know who you might think of as "old time Columbians" now, who were just kids then when I was growing up, and they, a lot of them spent their time out at Stephens Lake" (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

Hoppe had been a member of Stephens Lake from the early 80's until 1998 and had also spent time at the college's Colorado arts camp. When she learned that the college sold the arts camp, she knew that the college was in financial trouble. "That's when we shifted from Friends of Stephens Lake to promote lake membership to the Coalition to Save Stephens Lake to try to get the community behind acquiring it" (personal communication, April 3, 2011). In the Spring of 2000, Hoppe and Sue Bliss, president of the East Campus Neighborhood Association, invited all the neighborhood associations near Stephens Lake, as well as environmental groups, to a meeting to plan how to ask the City Council to work towards acquisition of the lake property (B. Hoppe,



personal communication, April 3, 2011). On April 3, 2000, Hoppe spoke to the Columbia City Council to explain how neighborhood associations and environmental groups were uniting to form the Coalition to Save Stephens Lake. She informed the Council that they anticipated many other groups joining them and that their purpose was to make the Council aware of the widespread support for preserving the property (City Council Minutes, April 3, 2000). Members of the Coalition to Save Stephens Lake contacted individual City Council members and were well received, but were told consistently that there was no money for the acquisition (B. Hoppe, personal communication, April 3, 2011).

Michael Sleadd created a website for the Coalition that included a history of the lake property, photos of the lake, and information for how people could help with getting city officials make the property a public park (Militello, August 8, 2000). Hoppe is quoted as saying about the lake, "It's so peaceful. It's like being on summer vacation...it's really unique to have such beautiful rolling hills and a lake in the center of the city" (Militello, August 8, 2000). The Coalition was responsible for contacting the Trust for Public Land in May to see if they could assist in negotiations between the college and the city to determine an acceptable purchase price (Militello, August 8, 2000). Cynthia Whiteford, Vice President of the Trust, visited Columbia in the Spring of 2000 to visit the site and discuss what assistance they could offer (B. Hoppe, personal communication, April 3, 2011). According to Hoppe, "That... was one of the key turning points, because then they came in with their expertise in real estate. They could do this professional, scientific survey of how the community felt" (personal communication, April 3, 2011).

At the August 21, 2000 Council hearing, Barbara Hoppe said that the Coalition to Save Stephens Lake had collected 4000 signatures of supporters to preserve the Stephens Lake property as parkland. Hoppe asked the approximately 150 supporters present at the meeting to stand as a sign of support to the council (City Council Minutes August 21, 2000). Representatives from the Greenbelt Coalition, Friends of Stephens Lake, The Coalition to Save Stephens Lake, Stream Team 406 (Hinkson Creek), and the Greenbelt Coalition spoke in favor of the city purchasing the lake property for park land (City Council Minutes August 21, 2000). The East Campus, North Central Columbia, and Shepard Boulevard Neighborhood Associations all spoke in favor of acquisition (City Council Minutes August 21, 2000). Many other individuals spoke in favor of acquisition of the lake property at the August 21, 2000 Council meeting. Reasons given were to keep the property from being developed; to save a beloved fishing lake; to preserve green space; to prevent additional traffic if the property were to become commercial; and to provide sledding, swimming and walking opportunities (City Council Minutes August 21, 2000).

In an open column in the Columbia Daily Tribune, a local citizen predicted that "Stephens Park will someday be appreciated by citizens of Columbia just as much as Central Park and Forest Park are by citizens of New York and St. Louis" (Pike, October 13, 2000 p. 6A).

Barbara Hoppe stated that she was concerned that the acquisition would require a tax increase, and so they thought it was better to over-prepare and over-worry. They spent a lot of time getting volunteers to go door to door talking about the benefits of the lake property acquisition (personal communication, April 3, 2011).

"We got a list of Stephens's alumni from alumni that we knew. We focused on getting alumni to work on the inside who wanted to have the city acquire the park" (B. Hoppe, personal communication, April 3, 2011).

One of the key strategies employed by the pro-acquisition groups was to establish a sense of urgency for the ballot issue. "We were having to defend against charges that really weren't justified, but you'd spend all your time defending. And you rarely win an election just by defending...you've got to have a positive, and the positive I think was, 'this is a once in a lifetime opportunity and it will be gone (if we don't save it)'" (D. Hindman, personal communication, March 25, 2011).

Referring to the environmental and neighborhood coalitions in support of the acquisition, Van Matre stated, "The people on the fringes are going to vote for or against you and there's not a damn thing you can do about it. But the great mass of people in the middle, they're the ones you've got to activate, and that takes going door to door, and people putting up posters, and making telephone calls, and that's where those groups helped" (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

There was a tremendous effort put forth by the various groups who were in favor of the city acquiring the Stephens Lake property. Their effort created the motivation for the city officials to create a plan for the acquisition to be possible, but the final decision would be up to the citizens of Columbia.

### The Trust for Public Land

When the Coalition to Save Stephens Lake was confronted with the reality that there were no existing city funds to purchase the property, they looked for outside help. "Initially we were looking for some national organization that would just buy it...acquire the land temporarily until the funds were raised" (B. Hoppe, personal communication, April 3, 2011). The Coalition contacted The Trust for Public Land and was extremely excited when the Trust expressed interest in the project. "Darwin! The Trust for Public Land is interested! Cynthia Whiteford is HERE! That was the turning point, I think" (B. Hoppe, personal communication, April 3, 2011).

On June 19, 2000, City Manager Ray Beck stated that he had been in discussions with representatives with the Trust for Public Land regarding the acquisition of the Stephens Lake property (City Council Minutes June 19, 2000). Working with the Trust would not cost the city any money, as they typically receive payment from the property sellers. The Trust would help both the city and Stephens College arrive at a fair price for the property and assist in identifying funding sources for the acquisition (City Council Minutes June 19, 2000). On August 21, 2000, City Manager Ray Beck reported that the Trust had conducted an opinion poll that showed public support for the acquisition of the property (City Council Minutes Aug. 21, 2000). The random survey of 300 registered voters indicated that 60% of Columbians supported a 1/4 % sales tax to fund the acquisition of the lake property as compared to 27% who opposed the tax (McLaughlin August 8, 2000). To determine what level of taxation would meet favor with Columbia voters, the survey asked if voters would support an ongoing 1/8% sales tax after the initial 1/4% sales tax expired. 57% stated they would support, as opposed to 32%

opposed (The Coalition to Save Stephens Lake website, August 4, 2000). The survey determined that 74% of respondents agreed that the lake property is one of the last large parcels of land close to downtown, and if the city failed to act, it would be lost forever (The Coalition to Save Stephens Lake website, August 4, 2000). "Once the survey was done and the Trust was in, then everyone was supportive" (B. Hoppe, personal communication, April 3, 2011). Mike Moore served as the Project Manager for the Trust for Public Land. Both the city and the college agreed in June to have the Trust mediate the sale (Shugart, October 2, 2000). When speculation began that the 111 acre property was not worth the \$90,000 per acre asking price, the Trust hired Development Strategies out of St. Louis to appraise the value of the land (Shugart, October 2, 2000). Hoppe stated that the Trust for Public Land worked with Stephens College and Craig Van Matre to determine what kind of tax benefits were available and how to structure the deal, so it would serve the best interest for Stephens (personal communication, April 3, 2011).

"They have vast experience in negotiating public land deals. And then they also have the ability to finance as well, but they don't buy land to keep it. They only buy land for it to go into the public. And so we got them involved in the negotiation for the price...and according to them, it was a very difficult negotiation," Mayor Hindman recalled. Hindman added, "They just couldn't get Stephens to come down. And Stephens had good reason for having it up there, although a lot of us felt that they were unlikely to get their ten million...from anybody. They were looking at it from the goal of what they wanted to get into their endowment" (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

Hindman said that the Trust was very important for several reasons. The appraisal was helpful in establishing an acceptable price and the survey was very

encouraging. "They did a poll that helped us realize that we definitely had a chance on this election, which I think was very helpful in getting the council to put it on the ballot" (personal communication, March 25, 2011). "We did have good data...and it gave us the encouragement. It gave us terrific guidance in how to go about this," added Hindman.

#### Formation of CARE Committee

On September 18, 2000, Mayor Hindman appointed a 37-member committee to educate the residents of Columbia about the forthcoming park sales tax (Higgins, Sept. 19, 2000). The group was referred to as the Citizens Advocating Recreation and Environment (CARE) Committee. Darwin Hindman appointed Barbara Hoppe and Skip Walther to co-chair the CARE Committee (B. Hoppe, personal communication, April 3, 2011).

Mayor Hindman said, "Skip Walther was a big supporter" (personal communication, March 25, 2011). In an effort to combat the growing sentiment from the business community that \$10 million was too much money for the property, Hindman added, "When it came time to pick the committee, I was intent on trying to get some significant business people who would agree that we ought to do this. So we were pretty successful at that. And I was very impressed by the activity of some of the business people, and they were true believers in this, and I think that made a big difference in offsetting 'you're paying too much.'"

Despite the fact that the Chamber of Commerce voted to stay neutral on the tax proposal, there were several key business leaders who supported the acquisition. Local

businessmen Richard Montgomery (State Farm Insurance) and Tom Atkins (various businesses) served on the CARE Committee and were very active in fund raising for advertising (B. Hoppe, personal communication, April 3, 2011). Art and Betty Robinson (Columbia Art League), Tom Andes and Sutu Forte (local musicians) and the Kevin Crane Family (City Prosecutor) were all very supportive (B. Hoppe, personal communication, April 3, 2011).

CARE began fund-raising on September 27, 2000 at an event held at Legacy Art and Bookworks, according to a September 26, 2000 Tribune article (Shugart). The CARE Committee decided that they first needed to raise about \$10,000 to serve as an advertising budget. They raised the money by going door-to-door asking for donations and by holding musical events as fund raisers (B. Hoppe, personal communication, April 3, 2011). Hoppe stated, "what we did is we formed sub committees to do...PR, fundraising, door-to-door stuff, but what it came down to, and it often does come down to, is...a small group of that committee that really does the work (personal communication, April 3, 2011)."

The CARE Committee was able to organize, raise funds, and encourage support for the land acquisition with very little time or resources. Having a citizen run advocating group made up of influential business leaders as well as neighborhood and environmental leaders helped give the cause credibility. Van Matre stated, "The proponents were SO well organized. The people that Darwin had enlisted on the park tax...Naomi Cupp and Greg Steinhoff..." and others were important business leaders who supported the sales tax passage (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

### Establishing a Price for the Property Acceptable to Both Parties

Stephens College Board of Trustees member Hank Waters stated in his March 25, 2000 editorial that the college must get a fair price based on the potential of high-end hotel or residential development because the reason the property is for sale is the college needs the money (Waters 2000). On May 30, 2000 attorney Craig Van Matre stated that regardless of the pending appraisals for the property, the asking price was \$10 million (McLaughlin May 30, 2000). City Manager Ray Beck responded that any public hearing on the property would wait until appraisals of the value of the property were finalized (McLaughlin May 30, 2000).

On September 24, 2000, attorney for the college Craig Van Matre said that Stephens College was proceeding with development plans for their lake property in case the ballot issue did not pass. Their plans included: filling in the lake, rezoning 35 acres of the site for mixed office and commercial use, and 30 acres of planned Urban Development (PUD) that might include high density residential. Van Matre stated, "The proposal reflects the surrounding zoning and provides the best economic returns for the college," (Bills September 24, 2000 p.1).

On September 26, 2000, Hank Waters argued, "What sense does it make to debate at this late date whether it's worth \$9 million or \$10 million or \$11 million?...If voters think \$10 million is a fair price, it's the right price. If they say no, let Stephens get on with another use"(p. 6A).

"Stephens was trying to get the highest price they could, and the city was trying to get something that was reasonable. And my thought was, in ten years, you know, \$7.5 million; \$10 million isn't going to look like that much money at all. I was hoping to keep



it lower, but I wasn't in the negotiation process" (B. Hoppe, personal communication, April 3, 2011). At a joint interview with a local radio station, Hoppe talked with Van Matre about creating a win-win situation where the college could get the money they needed, the city would get an asset that would continue to benefit the college as well as the city, and the college would come out looking like they are a good neighbor for the community (B. Hoppe, personal communication, April 3, 2011).

Mayor Hindman said of the situation,

I think the President of the Board was from out of town... a lot of the board members had no connection to Columbia... to a large extent, a lot of ethical people would say that their only financial obligation was to the college, and so they were trying to maximize their return on that, because Stephens, as you know, has no endowments to speak of at all. It looked like [there] might be a large business opposition to it, and they were basing it primarily on price... the real Achilles' heel of this seemed to be the price. Trying to sell it on the theory that Stephens College needed the money didn't go anywhere. I'm guessing that they did not have another buyer lined up. With us, after the election, they would know they had it sold and they would know we had the money. And so there were reasons we were attractive. Plus, the community relations would be good. But a lot of people, though, were VERY concerned about the price, and politically, that was a big concern. (personal communication, March 25, 2011)

### The Appraisal

At the May 15 City Council Meeting, City Manager Ray Beck stated that appraisals of properties indicate the highest and best use for a property (City Council Minutes May 15, 2000). A motion was passed unanimously at the May 15, 2000 Council meeting to proceed with an appraisal of the value of the Stephens Lake property (City Council Minutes May 15, 2000). At the August 21, 2000 City Council meeting, City Manager Beck indicated that Stephens College was asking \$10 million for the 111 acre property (City Council Minutes Aug. 21, 2000). On September 1, 2000, Mike Moore, Project Manager for the Trust for Public Land, stated that they had hired Development Strategies, a St. Louis based company, to conduct an appraisal for the lake property (Shields 2000, September 1). Councilwoman Donna Crocket is quoted by Shields as saying, "I don't feel we should give one penny more than what the appraised value is." Attorney Craig Van Matre stated that appraisals are subjective and the college will not be bound to the price determined by the appraisal (Shields 2000, September 1).

Van Matre stated, "I am confident that the property should appraise for at least \$10 million" (Shields 2000, September 1).

On October 3, 2000, one month before the vote, the city still had not received the appraisal from the Trust for Public Land. Stephens attorney Van Matre is quoted as saying, "I am guessing that we're in for some hard and tough days ahead...I think there'll be a substantial disparity between what the college thinks the land is worth and what the city is willing to pay" (Shugart 2000, October 3, p. 1). Shugart reported on October 9, 2000 that the appraisal for the property valued it at \$7 million. She quoted Attorney Craig Van Matre as saying, "I can guarantee I'm going to get them [the college] as low as

I can to make the deal...but I am just an advisor. I don't have any control" (2000, October 9, p. 1). Van Matre criticized the appraisal as only setting aside 17 of the 111 acres as commercial and stated that he thought the college could get more money for the property if they developed it themselves, but that he thought they would take less than the \$10 million asking price in order to be good citizens (Shugart, October 9, 2000).

A few days later, Van Matre stated that pressure from Alumni to keep the school in favor with the community led the Stephens Board to be willing to lower their asking price for the property (Shugart, October 12, 2000). Van Matre said that there was a real concern that Alumni donations to the college could be affected if a deal was not reached. "Stephens did not ask for this controversy," Van Matre wrote in a letter to the City Council (Shugart, October 12, 2000, p. 1). Van Matre summarized the final deal as:

We held at \$10 million for a long time, but privately, we all agreed that if we could net \$7.5 [million], that would get the college what they needed to get on their feet financially. But they agreed that they would rent it five years before they purchased it. And it seems like that annual rental they were paying was two hundred fifty thousand a year, give or take. Well, immediately after we closed on the deal, and I had the lease. I sold the lease through a brokerage firm, and I think we got a million dollars for the lease. In other words, the value of the lease as just a conduit for five years, because it was tax exempt interest, had a present value of about a million bucks. So with the [\$1 million] and then the [city] was going to pay \$7 million for the land at the end of the lease period, we wound up negotiating the lease so that the city was obligated to buy it at the end of five years. They had five years to raise the money. So I'm pretty sure we were able to

sell the lease and the contract through a brokerage firm for almost eight million dollars (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

Looking back at the negotiations, Mayor Hindman complimented Van Matre saying, "Craig really does a great job representing his clients. My guess is he worked with the college to come to a reasonable conclusion" (personal communication, March 25, 2011). Mayor Hindman added,

I honestly, to be quite frank, I would have said It's a deal for ten million dollars... To me, the opportunity was so great that we couldn't afford to lose it over a price that, in the long run, would long be forgotten and would not have any significant impact on the history of Columbia as far as what we paid for it. And another (thing): Stephens College was one of the great assets of Columbia, and they desperately needed the money (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

### Criticism of the Process

The Columbia Missourian reported on Feb. 15, 1999 that City Manager Ray Beck had been negotiating with Stephens College for several months about a city lease agreement for the Stephens Lake property (Gaarder, Feb. 15, 1999). On May 15, 2000, Councilman Janku asked that city staff look for all potential mechanisms to fund the park acquisition (City Council Minutes May 15, 2000). At the Council Meeting on August 7, 2000, a motion to schedule a public hearing on a ballot issue to purchase the Stephens Lake property was unanimously passed (City Council Minutes August 7, 2000).

During this process the City conducted ongoing negotiations with the county for a police/jail improvement funding source. Closed door negotiations and bailing out private institutions were criticisms that were hurled at city officials. An August 15, 2000 article in the Columbia Daily Tribune raised many concerns about the secret negotiations between the city and the county, closed to the press and public (Rose). Rose stated that if a police sales tax and a parks tax were to be placed on the same ballot, both would certainly fail. He also added that either sales tax increase would push the Columbia sales tax over the 7% line that shoppers might consider exorbitant. Rose criticized Mayor Hindman's statement that closed negotiations between city and county officials allowed them to speak frankly, begging the question, "Why can't they speak frankly to all of us?" (Rose, August 15, 2000, p. 6A).

It was recommended by Mr. Beck that the funding should not only include the acquisition, but also the development and maintenance costs (City Council Minutes May 15, 2000). Including the 1/8% sales tax ongoing after the park was acquired concerned Barbara Hoppe, as she wanted to eliminate as much opposition to the project as possible to focus solely on purchasing the land at that time (personal communication, April 3, 2011). At the August 21, 2000 public hearing, several citizens spoke in favor of the acquisition of the lake property, but were concerned with elements of the sales tax proposal. Larry Grossman favored acquisition, if a fair price could be agreed upon, but was not in favor of a permanent tax. He was concerned about other city priorities, mainly transportation, that were not properly funded. Devin Truebel wanted the city to purchase the lake property to be set aside as undeveloped green space, and he suggested that property taxes would be a more equitable way to fund the acquisition. Fred Springsteel

felt that any sales tax should exclude food purchases so that it would not be regressive. Henry Lane spoke in favor of the property being sold to a private owner so that property taxes could help fund Columbia schools (City Council Minutes August 21, 2000).

Councilman John requested that the Stephens Lake property not be specifically named in the ballot language so that if the college did not agree to a fair price, the city could use the money raised to purchase a different property (City Council Minutes August 21, 2000). Mayor Hindman replied that the reason this ballot issue was being proposed is because the Stephens Lake property was for sale, and if the citizens did not believe that a fair price was being offered, they would vote against the ballot issue (City Council Minutes August 21, 2000). Several Council members stated that they wished there was a definitive price at this time, but they agreed that they would work towards clarification prior to the November election and that the citizens of Columbia would have the final say as to whether or not to purchase the property. Councilwoman Crayton stated that she would like to see the price negotiated down. Councilman John stated he was in favor of a permanent 1/4% sales tax for park and green space acquisition, and that a tax that only specifies the Stephens Lake property for acquisition and maintenance, that does not consider future land acquisition, was short sighted. B259-00 passed unanimously, allowing the citizens of Columbia the opportunity to decide whether or not they wanted the city to purchase the Stephens Lake property (City Council Minutes August 21, 2000).

In retrospect, Mayor Hindman stated, "that's pretty remarkable that the council was willing to put it on the ballot without the price being determined" (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

In a City Council work session on September 11, 2000 City Manager Ray Beck stated that if the park sales tax passed there could potentially be general fund money that was currently being spent on parks freed up for other city uses, namely public safety (Higgins September 12, 2000). As of fiscal year 2000, the Parks and Recreation budget was \$8.2 million, of which \$4.5 million came from general funds annually. The proposed ballot issue was projected to raise \$3.5 million per year for the first five years and \$1.75 million per year after it reverted to 1/8% per year (Higgins September 12, 2000).

Councilman Janku and Mayor Hindman were optimistic that the park sales tax would free up some of the current general fund money currently going to parks for other city uses. Councilwoman Crockett expressed skepticism that there would be any extra funds freed up by the proposed sales tax, as she stated that once the Stephens Lake property was paid for; any extra money would need to subsidize either the recreation center or other park operations (Higgins September 12, 2000).

A September 12, 2000 open column letter in the Columbia Daily Tribune from Stan McCarthy covered many of the complaints expressed by opponents of the acquisition. He stated that the city already had enough parks; the city should charge user fees to pay for parks (not sales tax); the city ignores public safety and roads, and City Council members should pay attention to the city needs or resign from office (McCarthy).

An open column in the Tribune on September 15 asked the question, "Does the city manager believe the citizens of this community are stupid?", suggesting that Ray Beck was trying to fool residents by implying that if the park sales tax passed, there would be revenue freed up to fund additional police officers (Westbrook, September 15, 2000, p. 6A). Westbrook added that our local newspaper and editor Henry "Hank"

Waters were colluding with city officials rather than serving as a watchdog of government to prevent abuse of power.

On September 19, 2000, the Columbia Daily Tribune reported that Stephens College had submitted a plan to the city in August to fill the lake in and build extensive commercial, office and high density residential housing (Shields 2000 September 19). Stephens College attorney Craig Van Matre was opposed to moving forward with re-zoning proposals prior to the November 7 vote; however another attorney representing the college, Dan Simon, recommended that in case the ballot issue failed, the college must be prepared to move forward with selling the property for a commercial use.

As of October, 10, 2000, City Council members had not yet seen an appraisal for the property (Bills, October 10, 2000). "We've heard rumors in the \$7 million dollar range." Councilman Rex Campbell stated, "I'm very concerned about the timeline. I'm worried that voters won't have enough time to study the appraisal. It should have been out in August before we even voted on it" (Bills, October 10, 2000, p. 10A).

Barbara Hoppe stated, "We didn't really have that luxury, you see. It was the only ballot I think we could make the timing on...we couldn't make the August ballot...and Stephens College needed the money and a determination, so I think we were locked in and didn't have the luxury of choosing an August ballot because of the timing. So I just thought with the national election, the presidential election, with Stephens and people that weren't familiar with a lot of the issues, it was a more tenuous election" (personal communication, April 3, 2011).

As of October 11, 2000, the CARE Committee, appointed by the City Council to promote and educate the public about the potential acquisition of Stephens Lake, did not



know what the final agreed upon deal was, as it had not been finalized (Devoto, October 11, 2000). Councilwoman Donna Crockett expressed concern that if the Council did not finalize terms of the deal with the college by the October 23 Council Meeting, the public would not have enough information to support the ballot issue (Devoto, October 11, 2000). The appraisal was finally made public on October 9 (Shugart, October 9, 2000), but a final asking price was not yet public knowledge.

Public criticism spared no involved parties. Even the Trust for Public Land's role was criticized. Mayor Hindman described the situation as,

They [the opposition] accused the Trust for Public Lands of coming in here and cooking up an unfair appraisal, and making a deal to get public land, which is their objective, so they'll get paid...they're cooking up this rotten deal, so they'll get paid and get out of here. And I think that that really bothered the Trust for Public Lands. They had not faced that kind of criticism in all their things that they had done. (personal communication, March 25, 2011)

Much time was spent at the City Council meeting on October 16, 2000 discussing the various options for purchasing the lake property. Two alternatives were presented that essentially amounted to the city spending the same amount of money to purchase the lake property regardless of the option chosen. The lease-purchase option involved the city leasing the property from Stephens College for five years at 5.975% interest, while the sales tax could accumulate to make an outright final purchase of \$7 million at the end of the five years. The outright sale option would involve the city selling bonds to purchase the property for \$7 million and then paying back the interest on the bonds over a

ten year period. Both the lease-purchase plan and the bonded-purchase plan would end up costing the city approximately \$8,217,435, after interest payments were made, according to the city Finance Director, Lori Flemming. \$7 million was the appraised value the lake property according to the private firm hired by the Trust for Public Land (City Council Minutes Oct. 16, 2000). Stephens College attorney Craig Van Matre stated that the college would prefer that the city choose the lease-purchase plan so that the college would not have to pay off early their own bond of indebtedness on the property. He stated that the choice between the two options were, by design, the same dollar amount, so that there was no penalty for the city to choose the lease-purchase option (City Council Minutes Oct. 16, 2000). Skip Walther, co-chair of CARE, wanted to make sure that the citizens knew that the deadline to place the ballot issue on the November ballot was imposed on the city by Stephens College (City Council Minutes Oct. 16, 2000).

Councilman Campbell stated that because the dollar amount was the same regardless of which funding option was chosen, he would prefer to pay interest to Stephens College rather than some other outside group (City Council Minutes Oct. 16, 2000). The Council voted unanimously to support the lease-purchase option of funding the lake property acquisition (City Council Minutes Oct. 16, 2000).

Mayor Hindman encouraged the public to come to the Council meeting and share their opinions and is later quoted as saying, "After examining the appraisal and after getting a report from staff, I'm sure I will feel that this is a fair arrangement. I intend to vigorously support it" (Bills and Miltenberger, October 12, 2000, p. 1). This statement from the mayor implies that his mind was made up prior to public input.

"What we were paying for Stephens Lake was the \$7 million... the \$8.5 is not talking about the purchase price. It's talking about the purchase price plus interest, which complicates the whole thing" (D. Hindman, personal communication, March 25, 2011). Hindman added, "I remember getting on the telephone and talking to Craig and some others about the price, and I think I laid out my position, that I didn't mind paying that extra money, but we would NOT be able to sell it [the idea to the public]. We've got to have a price where we can go to the public and succeed."

Once the appraisal from the Trust established the \$7 million price, the negotiations began to try and appease both the college's needs as well as the Cities. Van Matre remembered the negotiation:

'I need \$8 million.' They said, 'We can only pay \$7 million.' And so, I came up with this lease idea; they were able to say with a straight face, 'Well, we're paying \$7 million for it; we're just paying rent on it in the meantime.' And they felt like they could sell that as something that allowed them to pay the equivalent of \$7 million dollars for it. But the way the lease was structured, I could monetize the lease for another million bucks. And so, the college got \$8 million and nobody knew about it (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

There were many aspects of the process that had to be carefully calculated and planned. Closed meetings, an appearance of the deals being made then sold to the public, the restrictive timeline forcing action with little time for discussion, and creative financing to get the college additional funds beyond the appraised value provided shooting targets for those opposing the acquisition deal.

### Open Houses Allowed and Water Quality Testing

Less than one month before the ballot issue, Van Matre stated that the public would not be allowed to view the Stephens Lake Property unless the City of Columbia accepted responsibility for any injury or damages (Feldstein, October 13, 2000).

According to Feldstein (2000, October 13, p. 10A) Van Matre joked, "What if someone falls in the lake, slips on Canada goose droppings?" Bill Samuels, chairman of Columbians Against Unfair Taxes, requested that the lake be tested for fecal matter and pesticides in the lake that might be present due to the geese population and golf course management (Feldstein, October 13, 2000). In order to silence those who said the lake was polluted, prior to the lake water being tested for quality, Mayor Hindman publicly drank water from the lake. Hoppe stated that it was a huge public relations risk for the mayor to drink the water: "what if he accidentally gets sick, unrelated to the lake" (personal communication, April 3, 2011). Mayor Hindman explained,

There (were) some blatant misstatements in the opposition advertising....that the lake was polluted. I got one of the television stations to come out. I just took a cup of water and drank it, right out of the lake, in front of them...and of course I thought, 'If I get sick, this is going to be bad!' (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

Mayor Hindman did not get sick from the water. Eventually the open houses were allowed by the college, "and everybody went out and loved what they saw, and then

it turned out that [the open houses] went really well for us" (D. Hindman, personal communication, March 25, 2011).

### The Various Options for Development

Prior to the ballot issue being voted on by the public, the City Council requested that the Parks and Recreation department create some concept plans for how the property might be used if the voters approved the ballot issue. McLaughlin reported on July 28, 2000 that the Parks and Recreation department had developed three options for developing the property. The first option would utilize the park as it had been managed by the college, offering a swimming area and a nine-hole golf course. The second option was that of a traditional park with an outdoor amphitheater, trails and education center. The third option was a botanical garden with conservatory and various ornamental gardens and tree collections.

Two residents spoke at the City Council meeting on October 16, 2000 stating their opposition to the golf option. One resident said that \$10 million is too much money for a 9-hole golf course and another said that if it were developed as a golf course, he would never support another city tax again (City Council Minutes Oct. 16, 2000). The survey conducted by the Trust for Public Land in August showed the greatest public support for the following uses: public picnicking; boating; fishing; swimming; and protecting wildlife, trees and historic sites (The Coalition to Save Stephens Lake website (2000, August 4).

Hoppe summarized the effort to keep all interested parties focused on the acquisition as,

There were many people involved in Stephens Lake—the alums, the golfers, the swimmers, and so there was sort of tension with what it should be, even before the parks tax was passed, and so my focus was always, 'Well we just need to acquire the park, and then figure that out later' (personal communication, April 3, 2011).

#### The Sales Tax Passes

The voters approved the ballot issue with a 53.7% favorable vote, establishing Columbia's first dedicated park sales tax (online history of Stephens Lake Park).

Mayor Hindman commented, "I was thrilled about the outcome of the passage, and worked really hard to have it happen" (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

Van Matre stated, "It was NOT a celebration. I got patted on the back and was told it was a job well done...but the alums were PISSED because they remembered going there as college kids, and nobody had told them the college was in dire financial straits. Nobody gave them a chance to kick in money and keep it going. It just sold." President Kurst was not very popular with the alumni at the time (personal communication, June 18, 2011). Van Matre added, "And they have some wealthy alums that could have written a check, but for some reason or another, they didn't want to advertise that they were hurting, because they thought that might hurt their enrollment (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

### Voter Buy-in

Involving the public in the process was of major importance. Mayor Hindman stated that "they (the Coalition to Save Stephens Lake) immediately provided a base of community support, and that is absolutely critical. And if the council were doing this in a completely isolated way, and said, OK, we've just finished the ARC, we don't have the money, we had the library going on, and didn't see community support for this, I'm not sure that it would have ever made it to the ballot" (personal communication, March 25, 2011). Hindman added, "They deserve a huge amount of credit."

It was important to structure the deal where the final decision was up to the citizens of Columbia. Craig Van Matre stated, "Don't forget, they also asked the voters permission by saying, 'we'll buy this park if you pass this tax. If you don't pass this tax, we can't buy the park.' So the real stake holders were being brought into the deal" (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

The Coalition to Save Stephens Lake was heavily responsible for getting the word out to the public and bringing together all the groups that would support the ballot issue passage. Barbara Hoppe recalled, "I was on a radio show with Craig Van Matre on KOPN, and had communicated with Craig, because he was the attorney for, really selling it for development... He threatened....it was worth more because he could drain the lake and develop all that...which really riled up people" (personal communication, April 3, 2011). Hoppe added, "We were just consumed with it. I really—it was one of those few things, I do remember telling my daughter, I was really ready to die for. I could see it was so important to the city and to future generations" (personal communication, April 3, 2011). Craig Van Matre stated that it is human nature for people to want to be part of

something bigger than themselves and to be part of a cause that has a clear good guy and a bad guy (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

Ray Beck was stating that the property was only worth \$3million, and he was not budging from that price. That's when Van Matre felt it was important to create public emotional involvement.

Van Matre said,

'Ray, we're wasting our time.' I went out and got those diagrams that showed if the lake was paved and full of apartments and office buildings and stuff like that. *The Missourian* ran them in full color. I think the *Trib* did too. Maybe lesser, but I remember it was front page on the *Missourian*, those plans. I mean, people were up in ARMS! (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

Van Matre added, "Making people think that we were going to sell it to a developer that was going to rape and pillage [made it] a credible alternative. You can't sell anything if someone thinks they're the only buyer. You'll just never get what you need."

Van Matre thought that turning the Stephens Lake property into a park was something that the public would support. He said, "being a participant in something bigger than yourself is real attractive. And I have a feeling it wasn't difficult at all motivating people to help with the Stephens Park thing" (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

Van Matre added,



That is human nature. You want to be part of something that makes you feel good about yourself and you want to work towards a goal that is bigger than yourself. Where there are clear lines between good and evil. That is what everybody's looking for. That is a way to give life meaning. That's what happened with Stephens Lake Park. It wouldn't make any difference how many things were going on unless they were overwhelming and the city was on the verge of bankruptcy. If Stephens College had been trying to put this through...it never would have happened...it was necessary for Stephens to be the bad guy. It was a clear case of good versus evil and long-term public good versus detriment. That's what motivates people. That's what makes people get up off the couch and help and contribute and be enthusiastic about it" (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

To summarize why the park sales tax to purchase Stephens Lake Park was successful, Van Matre stated, "So on this park deal they said, 'It's your park. You can vote for it or not.' That is why the whole thing came together. You had purity of motive. You had energetic leadership. You had voter buy-in" (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

### The Value of Experienced Leadership

At the time of the proposed ballot issue to purchase Stephens Lake Park, the City of Columbia had a city manager with over thirty years of experience and a mayor with five years of experience. Craig Van Matre had practiced law for thirty years with a specialization in real estate (C. Van Matre, personal communication, June 18, 2011).

Van Matre described his expertise as follows:

If I had a specialty here in Columbia, it was probably real estate development, and particularly helping people get zoning and planning done that got through the system and allowed people to use land to its highest and best use. Now the best is not the word that a lot of people would choose to apply to the developments that I've helped, because they don't want to see commercial developments, but obviously, the town puts up so many road blocks that it's very difficult to navigate a system without the assistance of a lawyer, so, over the years, I gradually gained a reputation for helping people who wanted to do development. (personal communication, June 18, 2011)

Van Matre credited city officials for a smooth process. "Ray (Beck) was very astute politically in the sense that he could gently guide the council members...He spent a lot of time negotiating the financial aspects" (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

Barbara Hoppe stated that Darwin was the most important proponent for the passage: "I think that Darwin was key, really; if there was a different mayor, he or she may not have pursued it and that could have changed things...Darwin really saw, took a holistic approach to community development" (personal communication, April 3, 2011).

Van Matre also credited Hindman: "Without a doubt, Darwin was one of the key people...the most influential. He walked around and got the votes lined up for City Council and appeared on all the local radio shows and talked to the newspapers." Van Matre added, "If Darwin had been lukewarm on it, it never would have happened" (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

Hindman admitted of himself,

One of my problems is, I'm always for the preservation of an especially beautiful green space, but I had to try and look at it from a practical point of view and say, "Now then, am I just out here with a very small minority getting ready to push again for something? Or what's best for the community?" And I came to the conclusion that I was going to support the effort for the park (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

Referring to Hindman's role in passing the election, Van Matre said,

I think what's interesting about this is the fact that a really popular leader can put a good idea like this over the top. Just from the force of his personality. You just don't realize the impact that a committed, idealistic—somebody who nobody can hang as having some ulterior motive, some financial incentive....where you're truly looking out for the public good (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

Van Matre added, "Nobody could tint anything other than the highest possible motives on it. And that is what it takes to win this kind of election."

In reference to the role of the Trust for Public Land Van Matre said, "to say that these environmental groups...were catalytic or influential--they had nothing to do with negotiating the deal. They had nothing to do with the structure of the deal. They had nothing to do with persuading the city to get motivated...that was all Darwin."

A skilled city administration developed a well-thought out plan that was acceptable to the citizens of Columbia and the college. The date and short timeline to make the acquisition possible was an important part of the plan to sell the property. Van Matre stated, "If you give people forever, they'll take forever on these kinds of things" (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

Coupling the park sales tax vote with a national election was also a deliberate decision. Van Matre advised, "Go with the general because you'll get a lot better turnout. And the turnout on the primary date tends to be conservative. It tends to be the older voter, the more conservative voter." Van Matre credits City Manager Beck as saying, "If we're going to have a chance of getting this park tax passed, we need to do it in a general election (not the primary)" (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

### Columbia is a Unique Situation

The data collected in interviews and quotes from newspaper articles points out that Columbia, MO is a unique place and may have a bias in favor of quality of life issues. Representatives for the Trust for Public Land found that there was a very high level of support for park issues in Columbia. As such, critics of this model of park land acquisition may determine that it is hard to generalize from this one instance.

Columbia has a stable economy with major employers being insurance companies, hospitals and the University of Missouri. This professional job base is very stable, and therefore the city experiences less ebb and flow than most municipal economies. Columbia citizen Peter Bieger stated that he believes the city park system contributes to the prosperity and success of the city by attracting quality businesses (City Council Minutes Oct. 16, 2000).

College towns tend to be supportive of quality of life tax initiatives. In reference to the Trust for Public Land survey of Columbia residents, Ernest Cook, director of the National Public Finance Program at the Trust said, "Compared to other communities around the country, voters in Columbia are especially eager to see government take action to deal with the impacts of growth in their city" (The Coalition to Save Stephens Lake website, August 4, 2000). The Trust for Public Land Project Manager for the Stephens Lake Park project stated that, "Columbians are very attuned about their heritage and preserving special places. This is one of the strongest polls that we have ever done" (McLaughlin August 4, 2000, p.1).

High quality of life is an expectation in Columbia. In reference to 50% of the proposed park sales tax funding being dedicated to ongoing maintenance of existing parks, Mike Hood, Director of Parks and Recreation, is quoted as saying, "It's very important if we want to see the community maintain the quality of life that I think our citizens have grown to expect," (Shugart Oct. 14, 2000, p.1).

There is a high level of public confidence in the Columbia Parks and Recreation department. At the public hearing on October 16, 2000, many residents spoke in favor of the acquisition of the lake property. Fran Pope stated that regardless of which

development option was chosen, she was confident that our outstanding parks department would do a good job (City Council Minutes).

Hoppe stated, "the parks department was great. And Mike Hood, you know, you couldn't deal with a better person, and you guys [Parks and Recreation] have always had a really good, I think, public image. And that just really helped too" (personal communication, April 3, 2011).

## Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

### Summary of Procedure

Research included a detailed review and summary of all the newspaper articles, City Council minutes, and local periodicals from the relevant time period leading up to the park sales tax ballot issue. These were supplemented by the interviews of involved parties representing the college, city and the grass-roots organization. It was apparent that the researcher could not improve upon the interviewees' own words. The data became the facts from the newspapers and periodicals complemented by the quotes and insight gleaned from the interviews. The data is full of personal stories that cannot be conveyed through questionnaires and surveys alone, and the result was rich insight that was not otherwise publicly available.

### Summary of Findings

It was a daunting task that faced the CARE Committee, city officials, the grass-roots Coalition to Save Stephens Lake, and Stephens College. They had to unite the citizens of Columbia to raise \$10 million to purchase a property that was not on any park master plan or green space preservation plan, with little time to do it and no existing funding source. A plan to save Stephens College was devised by the college and it involved selling a property that was beloved by many of the citizens of Columbia who had grown up swimming in the lake and playing golf there. To many, the parcel

represented the last large property close to downtown that could serve as a central park for the city. There were competing ideas for how revenue should be spent in the city, including other potential park properties, where the money to be raised. There was a contingent of opposition groups and individuals and a well organized Coalition to Save Stephens Lake who all worked to lobby City Council members to do what they perceived to be the right thing for Columbia. The Trust for Public Land was brought in, and they performed an appraisal of the property and survey of the citizens to determine what kind of funding source would be palatable. Less than two months prior to the ballot issue, a 37 member committee referred to as the Citizens Advocating Recreation and Environment (CARE) was established to educate the public about the ballot issue. There was much criticism about how rushed the process was and how the deals appeared to be made without public involvement, but after the appraisal came in and a \$7 million price tag was set, it was agreed that the citizens of Columbia would have the opportunity to determine if they wanted to buy the Stephens Lake property. Experienced leadership guided the process at every road block, and in the end, the citizens of Columbia voted to purchase the property that is now Stephens Lake Park.

### Conclusions

One of the goals of this research was to provide a framework of ideas for other communities to use as a guide for dealing with their own civic challenges. The most important concepts to learn from this research are the following: 1) It is critical to have an



altruistic leader. 2) Experienced leadership and planning in government administration are critical. 3) Involvement of the stakeholders is important.

To a lesser extent, this research also addresses: 1) How the government process can be described as either nefarious or well-planned depending on your perspective, and 2) After the fact, to insure that a parks department has future support, it is important to credit those who helped in the cause.

### The Importance of an Altruistic Leader

Having an altruistic leader is one of the critical elements for a city to come together and fund a large new project. Barbara Hoppe stated that Darwin was the most important proponent for the passage (personal communication, April 3, 2011).

Van Matre added, "Without a doubt, Darwin was one of the key people...the most influential... If Darwin had been lukewarm on it, it never would have happened" (personal communication, June 18, 2011). Referring to Hindman's role in passing the election, Van Matre stated that a leader who cannot be accused of having ulterior motives and is popular with the public was by far the most important aspect of passing the ballot issue (personal communication, June 18, 2011).

There are people in Columbia, who may disagree with Hindman's priorities, but very few people would criticize him for his dedication or genuine desire to do what he thought was right for Columbia.

### The Importance of Experienced Leadership

Had there not been such experienced leadership at all levels, there may not have been the confidence to put forward the bold plan that was required to make the acquisition possible. An inexperienced city manager or mayor might have been afraid to propose the ballot issue out of fear of criticism or might have given up at any one of the points where obstacles were encountered. Experienced leaders expect criticism and realize that the end result is what is remembered years later. Columbia had a city manager, Ray Beck, with over thirty years of experience and a mayor with five years of experience. The leadership of Craig Van Matre was credited by many of the interviewees as well. Van Matre was a skilled deal maker and knew how to motivate the public to act.

Van Matre commented that City Manager Beck was very politically astute and he was able to guide the City Council through the process. This case study points out that experience and good planning by city administration and representatives of Stephens College in advance of public involvement was critical to give the acquisition a chance for success. City administrators had to know what funding options were available, decide on what option would have the greatest chance for passage, create a plan to involve the public and business community, and sell the public on the acquisition with very little time to do it and no room for mistakes that might derail the process. It is a credit to the city and Stephens administration that they knew who to involve and were able to get them to buy into the cause.

### Voter Buy-in

All three interviewees expressed how critical it was to involve the public in the process. Van Matre stated that it was important that the final determination was made by the public. The city officials and representatives of Stephens College set up the deal and devised a plan where the acquisition could occur, but it was up to the citizens of Columbia to approve the ballot issue. By making the citizens the final decision makers, much of the criticism of the process was deflected from city officials. After all, they were just making the deal possible. The citizens closed the deal.

Part of the voter buy-in was nurtured by the involvement of the Coalition to Save Stephens Lake and the CARE Committee. They added credibility to the cause with non-government citizens leading the cause of saving the beloved property. The CARE Committee was purposely established with key business leaders involved to create an environment where it would be difficult for other business groups or the Chamber of Commerce to oppose the ballot initiative.

### Nefarious Dealings or Good Planning

Depending on their perspective, the proponents and opponents either thought city leaders were involved in nefarious dealings or good planning.

The opposition stated that the city bailed out a private college; all the deals were made behind closed doors prior to public involvement or input, knowing that the citizens of Columbia would pass a sales tax. Opponents claimed that the city paid way too much money for the property, and the local newspaper was biased in their reporting because the

editor sat on the Stephens College Board. Van Matre paraphrased the detractors as saying,

We can't afford it, we shouldn't be doing it...they were just horrified that they were over paying for the property and it wasn't worth that... that they had talked to developers and nobody would pay that. But, needless to say, it's an asset to the city right now. God, it's worth 120 million bucks. You couldn't replace it.

(personal communication, June 18, 2011)

Proponents say that this whole process was planned out and executed well. City administration negotiated with the college and came up with a plan that could work to purchase the property prior to involving the public. The plan was originally created by real estate attorney Craig Van Matre working with the Stephens College Board of Trustees. The Trustees asked Van Matre how they could generate the most money for the college that was experiencing financial problems. Van Matre began negotiations with the Columbia city manager to figure out a funding mechanism that would be acceptable to the public, generate the money the college desperately needed, and to a lesser extent, keep the college in good graces with the community. The City Council then involved the public and the "Friends" groups to lobby for the passage of the sales tax to fund the project. The city manager and mayor knew that there had to be a feasible plan for the acquisition before involving the public.

All the details were planned out as much as the skilled leaders could control. Choosing a general election to make sure there would be a large and typically less conservative turnout was part of the plan. Creating a need for the community to act

quickly by setting a deadline, ensuring that there would be time enough to go through the process, but not so much time that the issue would linger and perhaps be over-examined, was all part of the plan that Van Matre envisioned and brought to fruition.

### Giving Credit to Those Who Worked for the Cause

A final thought on this project came from a recommendation from Mayor Hindman when he said that you must give credit to those who are willing to work for a cause such as the acquisition of a park.

Mayor Hindman said,

The grass roots part of this was very significant. And the work accomplished by the council that was in place at that time—the city manager, and the Mayor, I'll say that, as far as the council, I think were really fairly remarkable that they managed to put all this together at the time pressures that were in place, and get this done. And I kind of think that at some point, there ought to be some recognition to the way that was done (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

Hindman added,

The Citizens Committee...they don't get recognition for what they've done. They ought to. They worked hard on this thing. It was a pretty significant accomplishment...my name, the council's name, the city manager's name are up in the park. But the rest of the people—there are a lot of people who really worked hard (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

Mayor Hindman implied that giving them credit for this project might make them more likely to participate in future causes.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no form of credit given to the Trust for Public Land, The Coalition to Save Stephens Lake or The CARE Committee for their efforts to work for the preservation of Stephens Lake Park.

Mayor Hindman summarized the significance of Stephens Lake Park to the City of Columbia as,

It's been wonderful for the community. I remember when the IBM people were here, we took them on a bus to show them Stephens Park. People are VERY impressed by that park. I think it's helped Columbia's sense of pride. It's also helped us pass other park issues, because it's been so well done that the people have confidence that we will do well with all our parks. I have people come up to me about the trail, Stephens Lake Park and the ARC. And a lot of them will say, "I voted against that! But I LOVE it!" (personal communication, March 25, 2011)

### Recommendations for Further Research

This case study and others similar in nature offer many avenues of merit for other researchers to pursue. One possibility would be to find a similar case that failed to fund the proposed acquisition and identify what went wrong and where the leadership gaps existed.

Regarding the Stephens Lake acquisition process, it would be valuable to interview dissenters to find out their main concerns. Was it an aversion to too much spending or was there something more they opposed?

Further interviews and questions pertaining to this case study that the researcher would like to have answered are:

-Bill Samuels (dissenter): What were the main reasons you opposed this acquisition?

Fred Parry (dissenter): What were your main complaints about the process? Was there a time when you thought that the whole deal might fall apart? Was there a credible source who said that the property was only worth \$2.5 million?

-Ray Beck (City Manager): When did discussions begin? It seemed like in May the deal had already been worked out, including how the city could fund the acquisition through a ballot issue. Is it typical of major issues involving municipalities to plan out a deal prior to public involvement?

-Cythia Whiteford (Trust for Public Land): What is the typical role and challenges that face the Trust for Public Land during these types of projects?

-Almeta Crayton (Councilwoman): Were you supportive of this ballot initiative? Was this land acquisition important to residents of Ward 1? Are there other priorities you would have recommended?

These are just a few of the unlimited research ideas that can be pursued with case study research projects. This research may be of use to the City of Columbia as a historical summary of the process that occurred, but it is the hope of the researcher that this research may assist another community in giving them ideas for how to navigate through and accomplish a similar challenge in their own community.

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Appendix A  
Questionnaire: Interview Questions

My name is Mike Snyder, I am the Senior Parks Planner for the City of Columbia Parks and Recreation Department, but my role today is that of researcher. I am conducting interviews as part of the requirements for a Master's Degree in Parks, Recreation and Tourism. My research paper will be available to the public, however, my intent is not to stir up controversy. I am trying to gain perspectives. For this to be effective, I need you to be as honest as possible. I am going to ask you the questions that you have already seen and I want to cover the information that is asked for, but I also want you to feel comfortable to add any other pertinent information that you think is relevant or interesting for the study of the acquisition process for Stephens Lake Park. If you would like to remain anonymous, please let me know and I will refer to you as a participant involved with the acquisition process. I will be recording our interview so that I can later transcribe your responses more accurately. Is this acceptable to you? If so, let's get started.

Demographic questions:

Date:

Name:

Sex:

Title:

Age:

Involvement role:

Would you reflect on the months leading up to the ballot issue?

Why were you for or against the passage of the Park Sales Tax that funded the acquisition and development of Stephens Lake Park?

What were your feelings about the outcome?

Who were the key people involved in the process of the city passing the ballot issue to acquire the land?

What do you recall about the process that was significant?

What were the critical events that took place that made the park tax passage possible?

Is there anything that has happened since the passage of the ballot issue that you would like to discuss?

Appendix B  
Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT

I, (Name \_\_\_\_\_), (Date \_\_\_\_\_) consent to participate in this research project and understand the following:

**PROJECT BACKGROUND:** This project involves gathering data through a personal interview process and will investigate the 2000 ballot issue that allowed for the acquisition of Stephens Lake Park. The data will be collected for analysis and may be published. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study is to determine what type of people and process were important for the acquisition of the Stephens Lake Park to occur.

**VOLUNTARY:** The survey is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or choose to withdraw from participation at any time.

**WHAT DO YOU DO?** You will be provided with the questions in advance and will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview at your convenience. The interview should not take more than 1 hour.

**BENEFITS:** Your participation in this research project will enrich the information base. This research is intended to add knowledge to the field of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, particularly, how a group of citizens can affect change in their community.

**RISKS:** This project does not involve any risks greater than those encountered in everyday life.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** This thesis document will be available to the public, but the researcher is solely interested in attaining insightful data from respondents and will make every effort to include appropriate context and complete responses so that all information is presented fairly. If you would like to remain anonymous, please let me know and I will refer to you as a participant involved with the acquisition process.

Thank you for your assistance in providing current information on the process of the passage of the 2000 park sales tax ballot issue. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact Dr. David Vaught at (573) 882-9517. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in research, please feel free to contact the Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585.

Dr. David Vaught  
Thesis Advisor  
Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism

Mike Snyder  
Master's candidate

Appendix C  
Interview with Barbara Hoppe  
April 3, 2011

[preliminary chit chat]

**Mike:** I really am interested in if there's other important stuff that you feel like needs to be told, please fill me in on that. And if there's an interesting story, you know that kind of stuff is important too. So let's go ahead and get started. I do have to say that this paper will be available to the public, but my intent is not to stir up any controversy, obviously. I'm trying to write the story because I think it's a neat story. And it's a neat deal especially because just the timing and the political climate and the ARC having just passed and these other things that had just occurred—you know, an opposition group trying to propose more police officers and a county sheriff and a county jail and there were all kinds of things going on at the same time as this which makes it an especially interesting story, I think.

**Barbara:** Yeah, the dynamics of it. Yeah.

**Mike:** So that's what I'm going for—trying to explain this process, how it happened, so that another community might be able to utilize this, or another organization.

**Barbara:** That's interesting, because Mike [?] and I have been wanting to do sort of a different history with art—how did people save Stephens Lake and it would be sort of on a kids / adult book line...it's an exercise in democracy. So we've been wanting to do that for ten years since I'm retiring May 1<sup>st</sup>...that was one of our projects for this summer, is to get that—so that will be kind of like a different kind of history. I mean from a non-academic.

**Mike:** I'll be happy to give you this whole thing and you can maybe use it as background information, because there may be something in there, like insight from Craig Van Matre, and some I might be getting from Fred Parry, even, that might be interesting for you.

**Barbara:** Yeah.

**Mike:** Okay, well let's begin. Would you reflect on the months leading up to the ballot issue?

**Barbara:** Oh, just the months. Okay. Because there was a lot that went on before the months before the ballot. ...basically, that was basically the months before with the CARE committee, and I was co-chair, and Skip Walthers was co-chair, and your father in-law was treasurer, and we met at the State Farm building and we had a variety of people on that committee and it was formed by Darwin. And so we had a very short time line to do what we thought was a very big endeavor, not only to get a continuing parks tax to acquire Stephens Lake Park and for future park needs, but that they added that continuing parks tax on top of that, which I, at the time, was really worried about. It was a sort of an extra heavy weight and burden to carry and it would sink or fail with that extra weight. So we felt a sense of...that we needed extra effort to get that passed, especially in the November election, cause that was a presidential...I think that was a presidential...

**Mike:** --Presidential, senate...

**Barbara:** Yeah. And there were a lot of races that didn't go too well, in my personal [opinion] on that, and so we were really pleased that Stephens Lake was successful. So that was mostly then the work of the committee and what we did is we formed sub committees to do like PR, fundraising, door-to-door stuff, but what it came down to, and



it often does come down to, is like a small group of that committee that really does the work. So during that time, oh, Chip Cooper was very active in that. Tom Atkins was. And Skip was, too. And your dad was—or your father in-law was great at giving us support with meeting at State Farm, and having lunch there, too, I think I remember. So Mike and I sort of, and Chip, and then it might have been a few others, but those are, there are three sort of focused on, a lot-- all the advertising and the door-to-door work and we did the, and I didn't bring it with me, but I'll give it with you—the brochure that we went door-to-door with in getting the people to do that and working up exactly what the brochure would say. And then we did fundraising because we didn't feel—we had a short time and we felt like we needed \$10,000 for advertising and the door-to-door campaign and the leaflets, and we didn't think the finance committee was getting it together. So we started doing fundraiser events, like musical events, Tom Andes came, and we met at Lions Stephens Park and we had a musical event out there, and people came and donated, and we got several thousand dollars there. And then of course we had the parks was very active during that time. We had at least one or two events at Stephens Lake for the community to come out and learn what Stephens Lake was if they hadn't been there before. And then Mike and I—because Mike's a graphic designer—we pretty much did all the advertising for all the newspapers. And I can't remember if we—I have the materials-- if we had individual names of supporters [on the brochures]? But I just remember working, like we were up 1 or 2 in the morning, and then getting up in the morning the next day just doing all that. So it seemed like a short time span. And Darwin was great. Once the City Council was on board, I think all the City Council

voted for it. And so they were out there...were you around? I know you were in the planner [role]. Were you involved in the campaign?

**Mike:** No. I started here in 1999. January of 1999, so I came on just as this was...

**Barbara:** Oh, Okay.

**Mike:** It was already in the works before I even had a job here.

**Barbara:** The ballot issue was in 2000, right?

**Mike:** Yes, November of 2000. I guess negotiations had started before I came on board.

**Barbara:** So during the campaign, immediately before the election, is when Darwin—the opponents were raising issues about whether the lake was polluted, and so we had a water testing of that, and of course, Darwin had swam in the lake for years as a kid, and me and my family had, we had no doubt it was fresh. We knew about the well. And you probably know about the well that feeds it. So before the test came in when we had a public event, the newspapers were asking about that, because the opponents were raising that as an issue for not supporting it. I was talking or dealing someplace else and the first thing I heard was Darwin drank a, got a, one of our Dixie cups for the punch and went down and drank from the lake! (laughs) and I thought, “Oh my goodness, that’s a risk, what if he accidentally gets sick, unrelated to the lake...and it’s really bad PR?!” So I thought, well, that was a great effort and PR effort, but it could go either way. I didn’t think that the lake would cause him to get sick, so, that’s where we did the little memos of the Save Stephens Lake bottles and...but see, my husband was supposed to do it in a glass bottles, because I told him these wouldn’t last, so we have new labels and we’re going to do, we gave Darwin an updated version with glass bottles, so we’ll have to replace yours, too! So, I think that’s, you know, I know we had people write, asked

people to write letters in support of Stephens Lake. We had a website. So, once, you know, as this, and we knew that, going in, we had public support, because the Trust for Public Land had done that survey early on, before the City Council had voted to put it on the ballot. And, do you know the background of that?

**Mike:** Yeah, and I'll touch on that here in a little bit. ...so the main stresses were trying to raise money and the short time frame? Is that--

**Barbara:** Right. Right. And just getting the public...you know, the public continued to be on board, and not let any negative opponents dissuade people who otherwise would be supportive. But it seemed like, I was crossing my fingers, I thought it was a big task to do, the continuing expense and the fund setting tax, and that was really my concern.

**Mike:** that's interesting that you bring that up as a main concern from your angle, because I think that the Trust for Public Lands, that was one of their questions, was, how would you support this, and they asked it in many different ways, and one of them was, would you support just the sales tax for the acquisition, and it was a higher percentage. And then they asked, would you support a quarter percent sales tax that would drop down to an eighth of a percent, permanent, it still received public support, but not as much.

**Barbara:** Not as much, yeah, so I always am concerned when you're narrowing the margin. And there were opponents. So I think those were the main things in the campaign. We just remember doing it non-stop. And the big thing was, you know, we did take on the task of doing the graphics and the ads and the--

**Mike:** --and the web page--

**Barbara:** -- and the door-to-door and the web page, right, and Mike, my husband, was involved in that. So after we got the vote, which was on a Tuesday of November, then on

Thursday, on Tuesday I said, “Well, Mike, the property is the city’s now. So I’m just dying to walk the park property!” Because I had been a member for many years, and so we were going to go out Thursday after work, and we started going out, going from the Walnut side, on the east, by the Hinkson, and we’re walking, and it’s cold, and Mike’s going, “Gosh, I’m not feeling so well, I’m not”—and I said, “Oh, come on,” and we walked a little bit further, and he said, “Well I’m not feeling so well.” So then I said “Well maybe we should go; maybe you’re coming down with something. So we’ll just come back on the weekend.” And I REALLY wanted to walk the property, but I thought, well, we’ll wait, and then the next day he had his heart attack.

**Mike:** Oh my gosh!

**Barbara:** Yeah. And so in retrospect, I was, like so glad that I didn’t push him to go walking on the property, because I would have been out in nowhere when he had his heart attack. So, he worked really hard on that last—on the graphic design, you know, and staying up late and—not that—his heart had problems, the blockage, anyway, so it was sort of a little after story.

**Mike:** Crazy. So what were your feelings about the outcome? You kind of touched on that a little bit.

**Barbara:** Well given that, I mean the national election, I guess we were concerned that there would be so many people coming out for so many issues, more than people that come out for the April and August ballot issue, and there were some hot issues there, that there would be more people...

**Mike:** Doesn’t the City Council usually choose the election, based on [the fact that] the higher number of people is usually better for certain things, or...?

**Barbara:** Well, we didn't really have that luxury, you see. It was the only ballot I think we could make the timing on. When you see the history of it, we couldn't make the August ballot, so I think we, and Stephens College needed the money and a determination, so I think we were locked in and didn't have the luxury of choosing an August ballot because of the timing. So I just thought with the national election, the presidential election, with Stephens and people that weren't familiar with a lot of the issues, it was a more tenuous election.

**Mike:** My guess is that maybe it served to help, because of student turn out—what student is going to vote no on a park issue.

**Barbara:** Of course, it's always a tax increase. That was the concern. And it's better to over – prepare and over-worry than under worry! So yeah, I guess, we just felt it was, we worried about that and just decided we had to do everything we could, non-stop. A lot of people worked on it—grass root as well as the campaign group—you know we had a lot of other people going door-to-door.

**Mike:** Who were other people? You mentioned Chip Cooper, yourself, Mike,

**Barbara:** Yeah, I'm trying to [remember]—I'd have to look at the list to see. WE had people that weren't on the committee at all that were working. And the Parks department was great. And Mike Hood, you know, you couldn't deal with a better person, and you guys have always had a really good, I think, public image. And that just really helped too, I thought. We had a lot of people who worked on the Coalition to Save Stephens Lake before the CARE committee that continued promoting the sales tax. PedNet was very active. Chip was sort of heading that, and they were interested primarily in the trails

portion of the tax initiative. So I think Ped Net was supportive. But a lot of the door-to-door work was with the group that was the Coalition to Save Stephens Lake.

**Mike:** And were there a lot of people [involved] who lived near [Stephens Lake]?

**Barbara:** Some yes and some no. There were people that were members of Stephens Lake Park during the summer that were involved, and they lived in Southwest Columbia, by the library and so not immediately... when we go back to that question, I can talk to you about the forming of the Coalition and how that sort of thing could be. So anyway, that group of people stayed very involved through the whole thing. Sutu Forte, you know Sutu? Did music, she's a neighbor and she did a variety of musical events to raise money. And she might have been at the event the parks committee had, the parks hosted at Stephens Lake.

**Mike:** She played piano out there?

**Barbara:** She brought her keyboard, and I think it was plugged in and she had some other musicians, and always tried to make it a lively, fun affair.

**Mike:** What do you recall about the process that was significant? And I guess what I'm wondering more than anything is, what were the key elements that happened that allowed it to move forward or could have stopped it in its tracks?

**Barbara:** Yeah. I noticed in your timeline that you had indicated that what was in '98 Ray Beck was directed to talk with Stephens College about possibilities of leasing the golf course area. What's important to know is there was a group called the Friends of Stephens Lake when the membership was dwindling, which was because we thought that Stephens wasn't trying to promote it, and I think that's true, because they sort of knew that

**Mike:** Was this in '97? '98?

**Barbara:** '98. And Paul Sturtz was involved in that. We were trying to get permission from Stephens Lake to try to get more members. We knew that through lack of advertisement in the newspapers in the summer that they weren't doing promoting of the lake as they used to, nor were they doing the up-keep. So we were trying to, at that point, work with Stephens College to promote the summer membership. But I think it was a bigger picture, you know, a bigger problem than summer membership at the lake. They were having problems with funding. So maybe just to backtrack even further: I was a member of Stephens Lake for, since my [child] was three, so that goes back to the early eighties, all the way to '98 or whenever it closed. I was, Stephens College had a[n] Arts Camp at Steamboat Springs and they had these wonderful cabins which I learned about long ago in the eighties, and we started going out there and renting those cabins and going skiing at Steamboat. So we knew about the Art Camp. And they, several years before the Stephens Lake issue came up, sold the Arts Camp, because they didn't have funds to operate it. And so, I knew that Steamboat, the community, got together, and purchased the Arts Camp to keep it going, because they thought it was a valuable community resource. So I knew what Stephens College had done. I knew they were in financial trouble, and I had seen, I knew about that model there. So then when we were, we found out, you know, Stephens wasn't interested in continuing operating the lake and owning the property and they were in financial distress and wanted to sell it for development, that's when we shifted from Friends of Stephens Lake to promote lake membership to the Coalition to Save Stephens Lake to try to get the community behind acquiring it. So that happened, that was in like '99. We were trying, we knew we were

on that edge, so it was the spring of 2000 that sue Bliss, who was, I think the neighborhood president from East Campus, we had a neighborhood meeting at her house with the surrounding neighborhood associations, and we met trying to figure out what we could do to try to get the city to acquire Stephens Lake. We decided we would do a special public comment at the beginning of next council meeting. So we must have met in March, and then in April 3, and I even copied it for you from the minutes, they were looking for someone to speak, and I really wasn't interested in doing it, and everyone likes to sit back and I was not thinking, and they said, "Okay Barbara, you'll speak for us!" And what we did at that meeting was brainstorm other organizations that we thought would be supportive of the effort, and these minutes sort of mention some of those. And we contacted all those organizations, the presidents, and got them to come to that meeting before council, and just said we would like the council to consider acquiring Stephens Lake. At that point, we didn't realize that the city had absolutely no funds to do it, so, even though Ray Beck was talking about acquiring and using the golf course, we knew that wasn't going anywhere. I mean after we did this presentation and we talked to individual council members, there was, like "Well, that could be a good idea, but we don't have any money!" And even Darwin said the same thing. So then the question was what to do at that point. That is when, I think by that point, we had set up a website, we had Save Stephens Lake buttons, because we have a button maker, and Mike had designed the logo, my husband, and so we started an effort, one: to get more public pressure on the council, because we thought, there's money there, it's just a matter of where you can sift it. And if there isn't money there, where can we find the money? So that's, then we started this intention effort with our website, and calling, and e-mailing, to



reach out to all the national organizations we could think of that might give support in some way, or funding, and when we got to the Trust for Public Land, they communicated back, we gave them the website, they were, it looked like we had an organization going to support this, so the vice-president, Cynthia Whiteford, contacted us, and said she wanted to come and meet us, and it was in the, I guess it must have been April/May. I remember it was not Spring yet, you know, there trees weren't in leaf, and we took her for a tour (we trespassed) [laughs] and we went on the property and around the property, I think we went up, too, and showed her the area. We talked to her and took her out for lunch and she also knew Darwin, who, because they have cabins up on the lake in Wisconsin, or something. I can't remember if we had her at that time—she became very interested, so I don't know if Darwin talked with her—if we got Darwin to talk to her then, or if she came back. I'm not sure. And they told us what they could do, and that they were interested in working with us, and they thought it was a great project. That's really, I think, what was one of the key turning points, because then they came in with, you know, their expertise in real estate. They could do this professional, scientific survey of how the community felt, and they did the survey thinking, with sort of two scenarios. One with Stephens Lake as the anchor, one with the Phillips tract as the anchor, because we knew that the Phillips tract was being a focus for development. And I, too, was interested in preserving the Phillips tract. So the survey came back that there were more people that recognized Stephens Lake as more central, and that Stephens Lake would be the anchor for getting the parks tax passed and Phillips Lake. So in my mind, the continuing tax was hopefully at some future date to do other parks, a southwest park, and that's where the Phillips Lake came in. So it was really the Trust for Public Land who

then, they worked with Craig Van Matre, but I know there was a problem with their key person and Van Matre on something. To negotiate and talk, and then that's a whole new, a whole other story about what the price would be, and there was a lot of opposition to that, and Stephens was trying to get the highest price they could, and the city was trying to get something that was reasonable. And my thought was, in ten years, you know, \$7.5 million, \$10 million isn't going to look like that much money at all. I was hoping to keep it lower, but I wasn't in the negotiation process. The city had taken that over. Did you talk with Ray Beck?

**Mike:** Not yet.

**Barbara:** Was he the key? Is he? He was key in that, you know, and the city, it was really, once the survey was completed, and it looked like the public would support a parks tax, that then everything moved forward with the negotiations with Stephens College. And I remember before that, while we were in that process, I was on different radio, I was on a radio show with Craig Van-Matre on KOPN, and had communicated with Craig, cause he was the attorney for, really selling it for development, you know he threatened....it was worth more because he could drain the lake and develop all that, you know, which really riled up people. And so I remember talking to him about win/win situations, and this could really be a win/win situation for the city and Columbia College [I think she means Stephens], before they were really on board with it totally, in terms of, you know we can get a fair amount of money for Stephens, which they need. The Stephens College students could, they'll have access to this wonderful park that they've used for years and years and years. Yet it could be this wonderful central park for the city, also. So this was an idea of a win/win situation for both parties. And so then, of

course, the Trust for Public Lands worked with Stephens College and Craig Van Matre in terms of what kind of tax benefits and things they could work with, you know, or were available in how to structure the deal, and so it was the best interest for Stephens. And so they got the interest, didn't they? And we paid it off over a period of time, and they got interest, and so the pot they got was larger than if we had purchased it outright.

**Mike:** And I think they structured it in such a way that if the city had had to bond it, the dollar amount worked out to the exact amount. They were pretty strategic so that either way it was purchased, it was going to cost the city the same amount of money, and so why not go ahead and finance it through the college, or pay them interest?

**Barbara:** Right. And so we picked up sort of a permanence along the way, because the price was sort of another road block. Yes, so it would be great for the city, but at \$3 million, or \$5 million, not \$7 million, so we had all of those little obstacles to surmount.

**Mike:** Were there any appraisals done before the Trust for Public Land appraisal, that you know of?

**Barbara:** Not that I know of. Stephens College did one before them, I'm not sure. I know the city did one after, and probably the Trust [for Public Lands] was involved in getting the appraisal, I'm guessing. But Ray Beck was very supportive. Once the survey was done and the Trust was in, then everyone was supportive. I should say, I should back up and say between the time, while the, even before the Trust jumped on board, we started doing, getting, doing, we had a petition, and I know we got at least three thousand names on that in just a month or two month period. We went to Art in the Park, and maybe Earth Day in April. Oh, and even a little tidbit, before that. There was a council election, April of 2000, so that's before the Trust for Public Land kicked in. And John

Coffman was our representative for the Sixth Ward, and so we had talked with him, and he was very supportive of trying to find a way to acquire Stephens Lake Park. So the Coalition sort of jumped behind him in his election, and I remember we did this flyer about Stephens Lake and that effort, and he was supportive of it in the Sixth Ward. At that point, promoting John, and the effort to save Stephens Lake and the park, you know, as a sort of a package deal, so that was sort of tied into his whole campaign, and he won handily. And I remember saying, “John, you gotta do this! I know it’s going to help you!”

**Mike:** Was his opponent against the lake?

**Barbara:** I think it was Sullivan, who is still in the Sixth Ward, in East Campus. I don’t know. I think he was more like a public--he’s a sheriff, [there’s a ] county sheriff he works for, so he was more with that “public safety—we can’t afford money for parks, we need it for police” [argument]. And you know, I never saw the either/or situation. I think when the community has more parks, there’s positive ways that families and kids and young people can spend their time, and that that’s all part of the holistic package of creating a community that addresses crime in a variety of ways, just on the front end versus the back end of it. So yeah, we didn’t see him as a supporter at all.

**Mike:** Was there a time when you thought the whole process might fall apart?

**Barbara:** Yeah. [laughs heartily] After we spoke to the council and talked to the council members and I realized that the city was chasing retail dollars just to keep up with basic city needs and that there wasn’t any pot of money there for other things, I think that was sort of a, “Okay, now what can we do?!” Then I was a little worried, I was happy when the Trust for Public Land came in, but sort of holding my breath a little when

the survey came in—the public survey—and sort of wondering when people, I didn't think people knew and supported the Phillips tract as much as Stephens Lake, but I would have been worried if they had abandoned making Stephens Lake the anchor and went with the Phillips, but the survey turned out the way I expected. And then I made a commitment, and that's how I got involved in the Phillips tract issue, after Stephens Lake, I tried to make the Phillips tract part of a focus in the future for maybe a park there in the southwest part. And then when they were doing the negotiation on the price, it worried me then, because the higher the price, the more questionable, you know, really, the tougher the sell. So that was a little bit of a question mark and added more weight when the price was---we wanted it really at about five million, and it was coming in at \$7.5 I thought, with the interest and, so, then, and then the continuing parks tax on that, on a November election, where a lot of people were going to show that probably knew nothing about the issue, so those were all the "finger-crossing" points, I think.

**Mike:** Was there anything real interesting that occurred behind the scenes that wasn't public knowledge, or anything like a neighborhood association that wasn't cooperative, or, I don't know, anything that--

**Barbara:**--Of course, yeah, well, we were trying to raise money all along for promoting, before the Trust for Public Land and the CARE committee took effect. I mean, before the council decided to put it on the ballot, we were raising money for public awareness, and paying for the website, and paying for the buttons, so we had various fundraisers and people working on that, and I remember people would say--Oh, and we had inside—we did mailings, you know at that point, pre-working on the ballot issue. We got a list of Stephens alumni from alumni that we knew. We focused on getting alumni to work on

the inside, who wanted to have the city acquire the park. And then we got a list of the alumni and did a mailing to them with our idea of what we'd like to do. So we had those little things going, and I remember doing some events then for promotion and fundraising, and people would say, "Well, you need like three months to plan this event," and it was like, "We only have one month, and so we're just going to have to do it in one month! [hearty laughter] So we're just going to have to do it in one month!" So you just do what you can do with the time you have and you work intensively. So those kinds of issues always came up. But we had great support, you know, from the Walnut Neighborhood Association, which is north of Stephens Lake, and they were more active than the Stephens Neighborhood Association, which is where I lived before--my first house was there on Ripley. Then the East Campus neighborhood Association was close and very supportive. The Hinkson Valley and then the Shepard Neighborhood Association were sort of the surrounding neighborhood associations that were very supportive and drew people from those areas.

**Mike:** When did you get word from council or Craig Van Matre or Mayor Hindman about the possible plan for funding? When were you brought into that whole discussion?

**Barbara:** Early on, because we talked with the Trust for Public Land early on, and, you know, they were, when we first talked with them, you know, and when we first met with Cynthia Whiteford and took her around Stephens Lake, they, she let us know what types of things they could do. Initially we were looking for some national organization that would just buy it/acquire it. And we had gone to their website, to the Trust for Public Land to do certain things, like acquire the land temporarily until the funds were raised. Typically, that they would raise funds via parks tax, and that they could supply attorneys

to deal with the land owner, and discuss the property, that they could do surveys to see if the public supported, so we knew really, early on, and even before the meeting, what some of the options were, and then talking and going out with Cynthia Whiteford for lunch, we knew that that was probably the route that we needed to go, unless the city had funds that were in some secret spot that they could move over.

**Mike:** Well, the reason I ask the question is, it seems like negotiations between the college and city manager and maybe even the City Council, I don't know exactly, it seemed like they had a plan, and a potential way of funding it, before the public even got involved. It seemed like before they even floated...but I know that the Friends group and the Coalition were started a long time prior to...

**Barbara:** Yeah, before the general public got involved, but yeah, I think the Coalition was, I mean, we were the ones that were, got all the information, the grass roots, we did the history, Oh—we went to the historic society and got the history, we did research on all the newspapers going back to the history of the lake, and I still have some of those, and we tried to get pictures and photos, and talk to—we did the Gordon Manor family, and reached out to them, and made contact with them, and so, yeah, it was really—the message we were getting after our April 3<sup>rd</sup> was that there was no money but it was a great thing. And the council didn't seem to think it could go anywhere. But we just didn't take no for an answer. So that's when we pushed forward and found the Trust for Public Land and then sort of contacted Darwin and said, “Darwin! The Trust for Public Land is interested! Cynthia Whiteford is HERE!” That was the turning point, I think. “Cynthia Whiteford wants to meet with you!” And she met with Mike and I and I think what she wanted to see was “These are mature, rational adults who have been working on

this. There's a good grass-root effort, and we have a base to work for them," and then, of course, then to meet with the mayor, and Darwin was, you know, sort of picked it up. He was interested, talked with Cynthia Whiteford, and that's when the city got involved and started working with the Trust for Public Land in terms of doing the survey. I think that was the next big thing in seeing where the resources were, and then the city picked it up in terms of negotiating with the college and with Van Matre. And I just kept hoping that they wouldn't do anything to sink the ship.

**Mike:** It does seem like there were all kinds of times where it could have gone wrong, or even just personality differences could have made the whole discussion bend.

**Barbara:** And if we had a different mayor who didn't see how that was important— Darwin also had his trail emphasis, you know, with the MKT trail, and with the biking. And PedNet had been recently formed, and I had already been on that, I mean, I joined PedNet. I knew Chip, so I was aware of that, so there was a partnership there, and I think they saw this as a source of funds for more trails and biking, too, so that was part of the base. And my focus was Stephens Lake, and that we have money for other parks' needs, great, and then I was just worried about adding to the load we were carrying to the election.

**Mike:** Was there anything else you wanted to touch on? We've got about five more minutes or so.

**Barbara:** Well, I was gonna say, yeah, I think that Darwin was key, really, if there was a different mayor, he or she may not have pursued it and that could have changed things. And he was influential with Ray Beck and Darwin really saw, took a holistic approach to



community development, I think, so I think that was fortunate that he was there, rather than somebody else.

**Mike:** So what was the Coalition's critical --

**Barbara:** Oh! There was another factor that is probably important for the thesis. Is were there many people involved in Stephens Lake—the alum, the golfers, the swimmers, and so there was sort of tension with what it should be, even before the parks tax was passed, and so my focus was always, “Well we just need to acquire the park, and then figure that out later.” So part of the challenge was keeping everyone on board for acquiring it in the parks tax initiative and not getting divided or falling off supporting it based on whether there was golf or not golf, whether there'd be a lake or not a lake. You know, or whether there were gonna be—and then there was the whole issue of, “Well there'll be baseball fields! We don't want that!” And that discussion was there before the parks tax was passed, so it was another of those issues to derail people, and so that was sort of like herding elephants, just to keep talking to people and saying, “Yeah, yeah, I know you really want this, or I know you really want that, but the first task is to acquire it, and then we'll go through that process.”

**Mike:** And we did have to create three options before [the ballot] people said, “Well we're not going to buy something if we don't know how it will be utilized.”

**Barbara:** Yeah, so that was another aspect of dealing with that and handling that. You know, and there was a whole group that didn't want the lake, the swimming, not only did they want swimming, but they wanted it at a certain spot, you know, the old spot, and not the new spot. And those questions and issues were arising the whole time, so how to keep people on board, and enthusiastic and working. But I think the Coalition was there,

and the people that were involved—and I can go back and get the lists, or the e-mails – were, stayed on board through the whole process, through the ballot issue –in terms of going door to door and promoting it—donating, oh—there were certain people also that were economic supporters that stuck it out in the whole process. And one was—I think they’re both deceased now: the Robinsons? She started the Art League. Betty Robinson and her husband. Art. Betty and Art Robinson. She was involved in starting the Art League. They were very generous in providing us some of our largest donations for the effort before the council finally approved getting it on the ballot measure. And then after, Tom Andes was very generous with his time and talents—his music. I knew we had a good thing going when, early on, when we were collecting signatures, Kevin Crane and his family were all supportive. We were getting a variety of support from people of all areas of the political spectrum. But I felt encouraged by that.

**Mike:** I think you’ve covered everything I wanted to. And certainly if there’s anything that comes up, or when I e-mail this to you for review, if there’s something you want to add, that would be great, but I think we covered everything, and I’m out of tape.

**Barbara:** Sorry!

**Mike:** No problem! It’s great!

**Barbara:** We were just consumed with it. I really—it was one of those few things, I do remember telling my daughter, I was really ready to die for. I could see it was so important to the city and to future generations. It was something that, if I died to make this happen, it would be okay. And once you decide that, making the time commitment, the non-stop time doing it, is less than sacrificing yourself to death.

**Mike:** That’s neat that you felt so strongly about it.

**Barbara:** And one thing I would like to give to you: We had these, when we were promoting the idea before the Trust was involved, and after, we had these flyers that say “Save Stephens Lake,” and we came up with this sort of paragraph that was the importance overall of the lake to the present city—this generation and future generations, so I’ll find that.

**Mike:** Well if you have anything like that and you can just make a copy and send it inter-office mail or something, or scan it into e-mail

**Barbara:** Okay, and we have a little logo.

**Mike:** That would be great, ‘cause that is a good summary of why you’ve dedicated so much time.

**Barbara:** Right.

**Mike:** It’s a really neat deal.

**Barbara:** Yeah, everyone—it’s just such a pleasure to see so many people there. We went there yesterday and walked the dogs and it is full—all the parking lots are filled, there’s just people from every walk of life, and students just enjoying themselves. You’ve probably gone out in the winter—sledding—just to see all the colors, of the coats, and the kids screaming...

**Mike:** Oh yeah, it’s crazy!

**Barbara:** And it’s such a reward.

END OF TAPE.

Appendix D  
Interview with Darwin Hindman  
March 25, 2011

**Mike:** I don't think there's anything earth shattering that will come from this, but I think it's an interesting story to be told. Hopefully.... My goal is that other communities might be able to benefit from this, if they find that it's, or care to delve into this. So the first question, or not question, but request is, could you reflect on the months leading up to the ballot issue.

**Darwin:** Oh, I'll try my best. As you point out, it's been somewhere around ten years since this occurred, and I don't remember great detail, because I honestly haven't been thinking about it. I was just looking at your timeline, which jogged my memory just a bit, and of course we all knew that Stephens College was having some very difficult financial times, and all of us had been wondering what the fate of Stephens Lake was going to be and there had been approaches, as I understand it, and I may have had some input on that, but I don't really remember it, about the city operating, somehow having an opportunity to run the Country Club that they had had out there. When I grew up, I spent a big part of my summers at the Stephens Lake Country Club, as it was then called, and a lot of the people who have remained in Columbia did that. Columbia's a small town, and while I went to the University Laboratory High School, Hickman was the only other high school at the time. And so kids from both Hickman, the junior high schools (and there were only, maybe, one or two junior high schools at that time, too: Jefferson Junior and --

**Mike:** --West Junior?

**Darwin:** ...I'm not sure West Junior was, I don't think it was in operation at that time.

So we, a lot of us would end up there, so it was a way that all the kids in town could spend summer time together. Columbia did not have public swimming pools, as I recall at that time at all. I don't think there was a single public swimming pool. And the University didn't have swimming pools. We just didn't have much in Columbia, and so I have very fond memories of my summers at Stephens Lake.

**Mike:** What years are you talking about?

**Darwin:** I was born in 1933, so, came to Columbia when I was two, 1935, and so graduated from high school in 1951, I guess, so I'm talking about

**Mike:** Mostly the forties...

**Darwin:** The forties, primarily.

**Mike:** So that would have been before Douglass Pool and...

**Darwin:** Yeah, I don't think there was a single, before in the early part of, in the thirties, and maybe the very early forties, there was a private pool that was open to the public, pretty much at the corner of College and Ashland Gravel. But that closed. And, I think that may have closed in the very early forties, I'm not sure. Hulen's Lake had not been built yet, I'm almost certain.

**Mike:** What about the Quarry?

**Darwin:** The Quarry was not considered a swimming place. It was in operation for, as a quarry, until probably the, maybe the early fifties, the late forties. I lived on Edgewood, and so we went down to the Quarry all the time, and they had pumps down there, so they pumped the water out of that pit down into Flat Branch Creek, so it wasn't really even a swimming facility. After it was developed as a subdivision, and the water was allowed to accumulate, it was private, and so, it wasn't open for public use.

**Mike:** Now Stephens [Lake] was private, too, wasn't it?

**Darwin:** It was private, but open to the public on a membership basis. And they called it a Country Club, because it had a golf course, and it had a lake for you to swim in, didn't have a swimming pool, of course, and so you would buy a Country Club membership, but they didn't have dining facilities; they didn't have beverage facilities like a traditional Country Club would have, and their rates were very much lower. They were the every day person's rates, as opposed to the only Country Club in town probably at that time, the Columbia Country Club, which is nearby, but it had all the Country Club features: it had a pro shop...although at one time, there was a pro shop at Stephens Lake; I had forgotten about that, for the--

**Mike:** --for the golf course.

**Darwin:** --the golf course. And the golf course had sand greens, and I think, later, they put in some grass greens, but when I grew up, it was always sand greens. So I, especially during the forties, the war period, which ended in 1945, the Columbia gas rationing was on, so there weren't very many cars. People got three gallons of gasoline a week, that was what you got, and the cars weren't very--

**Mike:**--efficient

**Darwin:**--efficient, and so driving was not an option for most people for every day stuff, and so, it was really great for Columbia, for kids, because you could just go anywhere you wanted to and your parents felt absolutely safe about letting you ride your bicycle wherever, because there was no, no substantial risk, it seemed like, with traffic. And so I would drive my bicycle from the southwest part of Columbia, over on Edgewood, over to Stephens Lake every day. And my parents would ride their bikes, too, because we tried

to save our gasoline for going to St. Louis or something. It was a big deal. You had to park your car for weeks to have enough gasoline to go to St. Louis. Pretty neat, in some areas. And then there was a bus system in Columbia, where the bus ran every twenty minutes, and so you could ride the bus, too, if you wanted to. I don't know that it ran to Stephens Lake, but it took you downtown, and somewhere on the east side of town, and you could walk from there. They didn't have bicycle racks on the buses, though. But anyway, because we were, to a certain extent, limited in what we could do. Now my family, my dad was a university professor, and so we, and in those days, university professors had the summer off, and it was a wonderful life. And so we would always spend some time, usually about a month, sometimes for the whole summer, but usually about a month, away, in the summer, but then, we were here the rest of the time, and Stephens Lake was THE place to go. It had swimming. It had two docks that stuck out into the water, and you could swim back and forth between those docks, and they had a roped off swimming section that went out beyond those docks, with a float out there. They had a diving board off of the boat house, and they had a, so you could have high diving, and they had low diving off the other dock. And the hillside had water, running spring water that they pumped in because the lake would get almost too warm in the summer time, and also, I think they said that not only did it get warm, [but] there was an evaporation issue, where it would go down, so that they actually tapped [the] spring to keep the water up. I don't know if they could do that now or not. But anyway, and then they had picnic areas, up on the top, had a dressing room, that sort of thing. It was just a wonderful place for the young people and families to be, and it was close enough to the university and downtown that your family could join you there for picnics, and the kids

could swim and play, rowboats, they had rowboats and canoes and things, and a little island that you could go around. Your family could come out and join you for a picnic after they had finished work.

**Mike:** It sounds like it really didn't ever change much, because I swam there when I was a kid in the eighties and nineties---

Darwin:---No, the same thing. I don't think it ever did change. I think that they--

**Mike:** The docks, the high dive, the

**Darwin:** ...and that's just the way it was. The only changes, I think, probably took place on the golf course. At one point, I think they reversed the whole golf system. They put grass greens in, but I don't remember playing on the grass greens, I just remember that they did it. So you know all about the life out there—you did the same thing.

**Mike:** I would go out there every now and then; I had some friends that were members and I could go out there with them sometimes.

**Darwin:** I see.

Mike: But I wasn't a member myself, but the way you describe it, the row boats and the island you could row around...canoes... it's exactly how I remember it.

**Darwin:** I don't think they ever invested in it in any significant way, so it never did really change. But it was just a wonderful place, and there were just lots of people who you know who you might think of as "old time Columbians" now, who were just kids then when I was growing up, and they, a lot of them spent their time out at Stephens Lake. It was... One of the things that I thought about when I thought about for mayor was the lack of recreational opportunities that Columbia had. And that was certainly true as I was growing up and probably as you were, because you stop and think what your



alternatives were. There weren't very many. And so Stephens used it as a revenue source, I'm sure, probably just to maintain the facility, because it was used by them as an attraction to get girls to come to Stephens College, they had there own private country club—that's pretty nifty. And they used it in the summer time, partly for community relations, I'll look at it as an adult on these comments, and partly to generate the money to maintain it for their own benefit.

**Mike:** Did they ever let horses ride around the --

**Darwin:** -- I never remember that.

**Mike:** I was just curious, because I know that equestrian [program] was an important part of Stephens College.

**Darwin:** Yeah, I don't ever remember seeing a horse there at Stephens Lake.

**Mike:** I remember hearing that some of the science teachers at Stephens College would use the property for inventory of flora and fauna--

**Darwin:** Well I wouldn't be surprised at all about that--

**Mike:** -- especially along Hinkson Creek.

**Darwin:** Yeah, because the rest of it, except for the rocks, it was a golf course. And it was mowed, and all the things that you do for a golf course. It probably had all kinds of awful stuff put down on the turf in those days, and now all, a certain part of which went into the lake.

**Mike:** So my next question is kind of silly..

**Darwin:** What was your question? [chuckling] I'm just kind of talking and don't really know what it was.

**Mike:** How much that you...you were really connected to the property--

**Darwin:** --oh, very much--

**Mike:** --before it even became an issue. I was asking if you could reflect on the months leading up to the ballot issue, but we'll get to that later.

**Darwin:** Well, I think in response to that, everybody knew they had closed it as a country club. It was no longer being done that way. They weren't really maintaining the golf course anymore, so you just had to, everybody had to be questioning what was going to happen to that property, and there was even a bigger question: what was going to happen to Stephens College? And so everybody was interested in...in the back of your mind was the question of, what's going to happen, and of course, as I think your time line pointed out, we talked about trying to operate the golf course. The city already operated the Lake of the Woods golf course, which had been a country club, and which failed as a country club, and the city took it over, and is still operating it today, and did so very successfully, and it would seem like, natural, that the city might be able to take over Stephens and operate it as a public venue golf course. I don't think the swimming was as high on our, in our minds then, as the golf course was.

**Mike:** And I don't want to put words in your mouth, but it sounds like you were for the passage of the park sales tax that funded the acquisition and development of Stephens Lake Park. I think that's kind of obvious.

**Darwin:** Well, yeah...

**Mike:** And then what were your feelings about the outcome of the passage?

**Darwin:** Well, of course, I was thrilled about the outcome of the passage, and worked really really hard to have it happen.

**Mike:** So who were the key people involved in the process of the city passing the ballot issue to acquire the land?

**Darwin:** Well, that's a really interesting question and the first thing I think you need to do is put the whole thing in context, and I'm trying to do that, but we had gone to the public, basically, to get the money to build the ARC, not long before. You can probably help me out on that.

**Mike:** It was the previous November ballot, so it had just passed.

**Darwin:** And it had passed by a very narrow margin, by something like 175 votes. It may have been slightly different from that, but it wasn't very different than 175 votes. And it had been highly contentious. And as a politician and as a person who had worked definitely hard on passing the ARC, and again, Columbia did not have, until the ARC was passed, ANYTHING for winter recreation. Nothing. And it was desperately needed for, well, I can go through the spiel about the ARC, but it was a very tough fight. And so being faced with the Stephens College--

**Mike:** --right on the heels of that--

**Darwin:** --was a, just kind of a[n] awesome thought. Of course there was a public group that was extremely enthusiastic about it, organized by, primarily Barbara Hoppe, and it was, it first [was] made up primarily of people who lived near that park and had an obvious benefit from that park being in existence. And I as mayor [thought] "this couldn't pass on a city-wide basis, because we don't have the money to do that, [we] barely made it with the ARC, and now we go back and ask for it." And then, as is always the case, there was a question about whether or not the core that you would expect to have help you on that, and that would be, you would think that the core would come from

parks and recreation and environmental type people, and there was always this debate about what should be done in developing a city, and there was a tremendous feeling among a lot of people in that group that you need a plan and that you need to have intense development near the center of your city, and this was the one place that that could happen. And so I didn't know, I was sitting there thinking, "Good grief, we barely passed the ARC, and there are a lot of people that are mad as thunder about the ARC, and they're going to be geared up ready to fight anything else where we go out to the public, and you know you put your hat out once, and now you're going for another recreational facility, and there are all these other people who have other issues, who are going to be wondering why they didn't get somebody to come with them." And then I thought The base is likely to be split, because they're going to say, there's going to be a lot of argument that this should be a highly planned, new urban-type development that would bring development into the center of the city.

**Mike:** And this property was not identified in any park master plan, or open space--

**Darwin:** --That's right. And we always had the ARC, or any idea of having a recreation center has been part of the park master plan for years and years. This is the third time that I know of that we've tried for the ARC and we failed twice, and made it finally. And this was not on the master plan. You point that out. And being on the master plan is always very useful in selling to the public. And it came at a time where we had just been, as you pointed that out, just been to the public. There was a possibility that there would be a split among what would be your base with respect with this and...

**Mike:** because environmental folks would be also ones who would say we should have -  
-- ? public infill---?23:17

**Darwin:** That's exactly right. And they stand there and use that all the time. Although I've learned over the years there's a question of how much they mean it because whenever something approaches their neighborhood, they're against it. [laughs heartily] And so and that turns out to be exactly what happened here. People who preached that sort of thing forgot about that and said, wait a minute, this is encroaching on a beautiful piece of property, and so I'm against it. So I guess what it really proves is--

**Mike:** --against the development--

**Darwin:** --against the development—and for preserving it. But couldn't be sure which way that was going to go, and I knew that there would be a very strong support for the park, but wasn't sure it would be city-wide. And [I] knew that there would be a possibility of a split, and I felt that, most likely, the largest part would be for the park, but if you split your base, and we had such a close election on the ARC, that the possibility of this being a very close election, and your base being split, even not, even, not 50/50, but split then you could end up without a very successful effort. So there were lots of considerations there from the political point of view. And I also was afraid that people would think that this is a neighborhood benefit. But I came to the conclusion that, as I typically would, and that's one of my problems is, I'm always for the preservation of an especially beautiful green space, but I had to try and look at it from a practical point of view and say, "Now then, am I just out here with a very small minority getting ready to push again for something? Or what's best for the community?" And I came to the conclusion that I was going to support the effort for the park, and then so of course the

city didn't-- we really didn't want to have an election if we could figure out a way out of it, and so I'm sure all kinds of effort went in to, "Can we lease it, can we, or-- what are the options--would Stephens give it to us?" Anything to avoid having an election, because it looked like it might really be a [tough election]---

**Mike:** -- --and of course they were in economic trouble, so they couldn't [give it]

**Darwin:** --Stephens was in economic trouble, so ...I don't know exactly how it got to the point where we found out what Stephens was asking for it, but I'm sure it...

**Mike:** Well it seems like Craig Van Matre had a pretty good --I'm not exactly sure how it all occurred, but it seemed like he maybe approached the city with a pretty good plan in mind for how it could occur, you know, because he had time lines that were set the day after the ballot issue and you know it seemed like, there was some pretty good planning that occurred.

**Darwin:** I don't know, the question, I'm sure that's right. Stephens, but I don't know, and you'll probably be able to figure this out, but whether they started off that way, or whether they had really just planned to sell it, and then they began to see that there was community interest in it, and then they developed their plan and came to the city.

**Mike:** Certainly when they originally were talking with the city about the city managing the golf course, it...

**Darwin:** --that may be what led to it. They talked to them about managing the golf course and then they said they're going to sell it and they may have come to the city and said, "I will sell it to you on these terms." Beck would probably know more about that than anybody because, you know, the city manager's office is what handles --

**Mike:** Well that brings us back to the original question. The key people. Ray Beck would have been one. And you said Barbara Hoppe.

**Darwin:** Barbara Hoppe is the leader of the Save Stephens Lake Group, which was formed. And then I became very involved in it. From two or three different angles. One of them is, of course, I was, spent a lot of time working with the city manager, and then the council had the, convinced the council to

**Mike:** -- put the vote forward--

**Darwin:** --the vote forward. And then I had to appoint the committee to run the, to run the campaign... the city can't do that, and so, but that came after all of the after the deal had been worked out.

**Mike:** Who do you think were the biggest alibis [you meant allies] with the college? You know obviously the board had an obligation to bring in money for the college, but they also kind of wanted to be good neighbors for the city of Columbia. Who do you think were the best alibis for the city?

**Darwin:** Now by alibis, do you mean working for the city.

**Mike:** --working to come up with a resolution that worked out good for the college and good for the city. Or did you not have many negotiations with them directly?

**Darwin:** Well of course the president of the college, and that was a woman, what was her name?

**Mike:** I don't recall. Most of their public speaking was through their attorney. I didn't really find any—and occasionally Hank Waters had an editorial, where he...

**Darwin:** Was Hank on the board?

**Mike:** He was a board member, and he revealed that in his editorials.

**Darwin:** Bob Smith.

**Mike:** That name doesn't sound familiar.

**Darwin:** You might want to check that out. He was a former mayor.

**Mike:** Okay.

**Darwin:** I think maybe he may have been on the board at that time. I know that I talked to two or three board members at different times, and there were, of course, one of the problems that, you never know exactly how people at the college felt about these things, but I think the president of the board was from out of town. And so a lot of the board members had no connection to Columbia. And so, I think, to a large extent, a lot of ethical people would say that their only financial obligation was to the college, and so they were trying to maximize their return on that, because Stephens, as you know, has no endowments to speak of at all.

**Mike:** Well originally Craig Van Matre came out and said, you know we don't really care what the appraisals come back for. We need ten million, and that's the asking price.

**Darwin:** Right.

**Mike:** Eventually they came down to the appraised price.

**Darwin:** And, now Craig, Craig really does a great job representing his clients. I like Craig a lot and, but my guess is that he probably worked, he would make those kinds of statements, but I would guess, and I don't know if he'd talk to you about this or not, but my guess is he worked with the college to come to a reasonable conclusion--

**Mike:** -- to be a good neighbor.

**Darwin:** -- yeah. You know the emphasis of the college also involved being acceptable to Columbia. The other thing—



**Mike:** The deal had to sell.

**Darwin:** There was another thing that may have been somewhat related to this. There was a—Stephens owned some houses over by the playhouse and they decided they wanted to tear some of those houses down and do a parking lot. And the east campus neighborhood people just went berserk over that. I don't know if that was anywhere near the same time---

**Mike:** I remember that happening, but I don't remember--

**Darwin:** You might want to check that out because that could have had some effect on Stephens' sensitivity to community relations. Stephens had several issues with community relations, and the timing would be interesting for you to try and figure out. One of them had to do with Boone Hospital Center and the expansion of the Boone Hospital Center. Also the expansion in the master plan of Stephens College. And the east campus neighborhood was very resentful of the expansion of Boone Hospital Center into their neighborhood. And they felt various attempts by the—and finally they reached a settlement with the Boone Hospital Center. They were very wary of the expansion of Stephens College into the neighborhood, for fear they would be taking houses down and changing the character of their neighborhood, and so there were some issues there that had become pretty public and so all of those things might have been contributing factors into what Stephens was facing when it was dealing with whether or not to try to sell this to a developer or sell it to the city, so you may want to look into that.

**Mike:** Okay.

**Darwin:** But I know that the, in some way or another, this price of ten million dollars came up. And then we realized that this probably was not going to be palatable to the

voters. I honestly, to be quite frank, I would have said “It’s a deal for ten million dollars.” That probably has different values and that to a developer the value is based on what he can pay for it and then develop it and then make a profit.

**Mike:** And at the time I think you were quoted in the paper as saying, using two examples, one was Central Park in New York City that, you know, way back when, they thought that they paid too much for that, and the other one was Cosmo park, how it was out in the middle of nowhere...

**Darwin:** That was exactly the way I felt about it. You know, to me, the opportunity was so great that we couldn’t afford to lose it over a price that, in the long run, would long be forgotten and would not have any significant impact on the history of Columbia as far as what we paid for it. And another—they probably didn’t mention this, but Stephens College was one of the great assets of Columbia, and they desperately needed the money, and we don’t seem to hesitate to go out and fund certain private --

**Mike:** --So helping them out was not a bad thing.

**Darwin:** So helping Stephens College was probably in the interest of Columbia. And so, but all that still didn’t change the point that we needed to pass this with public approval. And there, the real estate people were pouring out. It looked like it might be a large business opposition to it, and they were basing it primarily on price. I don’t think too many people were-- There were a certain number of people complaining that we had too many parks and all that kind of thing. But the real Achilles’ heel of this seemed to be the price. I think if you know-- if people thought it was a bargain that-- they would have voted for it even though we had just gotten the ARC. But now we [had] just finished the ARC and a lot of people complained that for the amount of money we had just spent on

the ARC the price became a big issue. Trying to sell it on the theory that Stephens College needed the money didn't go anywhere, even though I thought it was right, it was just, and you had those bucket developers coming out and saying, "You're paying too much for it," and so forth. Of course they could have had an ulterior motive that they themselves would like to be the ones who would buy it. But who knows.

**Mike:** You know the other thing I had forgotten about was the library had just passed, also.

**Darwin:** Is that right?

**Mike:** \$20 million redevelopment of the library.

**Darwin:** Well, and of course that was highly controversial. Not as controversial as it got to be when they started—they hadn't started tearing down the old one, had they?

**Mike:** I don't think so. No they hadn't.

**Darwin:** If they had, that might have doomed this. Because, you know, there was such a tremendous reaction to tearing down that old, sacred library building that people were just MAD. I don't think they were right about it, but they were mad. The public gets mad sometimes. No kidding.

**Mike:** Well, you've answered these two questions, kind of, what do you recall about the process that was significant, you've kind of touched on that, and what were the critical events that took place that made the parks sales tax passage possible.

**Darwin:** I know that we--and I think I suggested this, but I'm not sure-- but we got in touch with the "Something for Public Land."

**Mike:** The Trust for Public Land.

**Darwin:** The Trust for Public Land. And it turns out that the gal who is in charge of the Central United States has an office in Minneapolis and her name is Cynthia Whiteford.

And she has a little cabin very close to our little cabin up in --

**Mike:** -- Minnesota?

**Darwin:** --Minnesota. And but anyway, their, what they do is ,they go out and, this is sort of a perfect situation for them, and they go out and negotiate deals for the acquisition of public lands, where the governmental agency just can't do it. And, like in our case, we couldn't do it because we didn't have the authority. We didn't have the money. As you well know, we can't enter into a contract to do something without the money actually being there to do it. And so Columbia didn't have it. We couldn't. But the Trust for Public Lands can. And so they do this all the time. Where bureaucracies are tied up, and their ability to act--due to bureaucratic rules, they're so tied down that the other party won't wait.

**Mike:** So the City Council was able to make a Statement of Intent with the college but based on whether or not the issue passed.

**Darwin:** That's right. And, but, so the way we got a hold of the Trust for Public Lands. And they came down and looked at the property, and realized that this in their view is an ideal piece of public land, and so they agreed to try and lead it, I guess you would say, the negotiations. And the argument was that it won't be between two adverse parties and nobody else. They have vast experience in negotiating public land deals. And then they also have the ability to finance as well. But they don't buy land to keep it. They only buy land for it to go into the public. And so we got them involved in the negotiation for the price. And they, and you might want to talk to this woman, Cynthia Whiteford, because

they thought-- and according to them, it was a very difficult negotiation. They just couldn't get Stephens to come down [in price]. And Stephens had good reason for having it up there, although a lot of us felt that they were unlikely to get their ten million or whatever it was they wanted from anybody. They were looking at it from the goal of what they wanted to get in to their endowment.

**Mike:** Now the trust is who paid for the appraisal.

**Darwin:** And they did two or three things that I thought were really helpful. One of them is I think that they paid for the appraisal. I believe they did. And they also helped us do a survey. And the survey was very encouraging. They said that Columbia came out to be a community interested in their environment on par with places like Boulder, Colorado and other places. They were really surprised. That gave us a significant amount of optimism. In other words, they did a poll that helped us realize that we definitely had a chance on this election, which I think was very helpful in getting the council to put it on the ballot. But the council and some of this may not be quite right, but I was very much in favor of it going on the ballot, although, you know, you had to be very careful, because negotiations of the price were going on. I couldn't be out there saying, "Let's just give them the ten million dollars," because didn't want to affect the negotiations, didn't want to play a bad card in connection with the negotiations, and on the other hand, I also knew that we couldn't win the election without it being a price that we could...

**Mike:** And you guys had to put it on the ballot issue before the negotiations of the price even occurred.

**Darwin:** No, I don't think so. I think that the price--

**Mike:** --Because the County Clerk had to have it by August 21,

**Darwin:** --and we still didn't have a price?

**Mike:** --Well, we knew what Stephens was asking, but there had been no appraisal done, there were still a lot of—even in the council discussion, there was a lot of discussion that had not even occurred yet. When I'm reading the council minutes, there were a lot of council members that were saying, "We think we can get this price down," Almeta Creighton said, "I think we should talk this price down quite a bit, several other—Janku—several others were saying we feel like there's a lot more negotiation that needs to occur—but I feel good about this because we're putting it to the voters to decide, and we'll know the price before it goes to the voters to decide.

**Darwin:** I see. Okay. Well then I guess that was really—that's pretty remarkable that the council was willing to put it on the ballot without the price being determined. And I guess I didn't exactly remember that's the way it was, but I guess it is.

**Mike:** It's kind of like we had a "not to exceed---" number.

**Darwin:** That's probably right.

**Mike:** Ten million was the "not to exceed" number

**Darwin:** Which might have been kind of clever, because then if it came in at a lower price, we could point that out. Anyway, that was really good. And I guess, I was reading a piece by Tina Fey in the New Yorker the other day, and as you know, she writes for Saturday Night Live and does all this sort of thing, and she says, you know, when it comes to writing these Saturday Night Live scripts, people ask, "Well when do you know you're through?" And she says, "It isn't perfection; it's 11:30." And so it's the same thing. You know, it isn't perfection. This is where we are. The law says you gotta do this

to get it on the ballot by a certain time. It's what we had to do. It's great that the council—and of course I know I was always for it, but I've kind of forgotten all of the details of the council activity at that time.

**Mike:** There's another attorney, Skip Walther, who, at that time wanted to point out at one of the council meetings that the council was not setting these artificial time lines; it was the college. The college is the one that said to you, "We have to have a decision by November 8, or else this is going to be put up for sale."

**Darwin:** Skip Walther was a big supporter.

**Mike:** Yeah, he was a CARE member. The citizens.

**Darwin:** The citizenry group? That was the name of the group?

**Mike:** The group that you appointed. The 34 members or so.

**Darwin:** And I appointed them before we put it on the ballot?

**Mike:** I believe so, yeah. Oh, no, maybe not. But I remember at the October 31 council meeting or whatever date it was towards the end of October, he got up and stated that we just want to reiterate that the council did not create this artificial rush to get this done. That was opposed [you meant imposed] upon them by the college.

**Darwin:** Right. OK. But Skip had also been very active in the ARC. He's very much, you know, he's really been a good guy.

**Mike:** He's a big tennis player.

**Darwin:** Uh huh. A big tennis player. And there's no tennis at the ARC, and no tennis at Stephens Lake. And so... but anyway whatever happened there, the council did put it on, and we worked very closely with the Trust for Public Lands, and I would recommend that you talk to Cynthia Whiteside..uh, Whiteberg.

**Mike:** Her name did come up a few times, but there's also a Moore, somebody Moore, who was the local—the project manager.

**Darwin:** Maybe--

**Mike:** the local project manager. Steve Moore or something like that.

**Darwin:** And so she may tell you how to get a hold of Steve Moore and so forth.

**Mike:** Was there ever a time when you thought the process might fall apart?

**Darwin:** Well I think it's like any—it's like a game, it's like anything else in politics—that the chances of it falling apart are always there, always there. Governor Carnahan one time pointed out: he said that in Geometry, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. And in politics, the shortest distance between two points is always a very crooked line. And that is the way it is! [laughs] And so, from deciding you want the park to getting it involves many a turn, and so that was, I mean, the risks were always there. There was a risk that Stephens would sell it to somebody else, get a better price and be done with it; there was a risk that the price would be so high that we couldn't sell it to the public; there was a risk that the opposition to it would succeed; there was a risk for, any number of other reasons, that it wouldn't pass. I mean it just went on and on, what the risks were. And if you look at the political side of it and say, [we] just did the ARC,

**Mike:** library

**Darwin:** the library, the general grumbling about the amount of park land that we had, the price, the uncertainty—people don't like to buy into uncertainty—you just go on down the line—the risks for something going completely wrong...



**Mike:** But you don't recall any meetings with the college or anything like that where there was just a, I don't know, un-agreeable moment or something like that where someone stormed out.

**Darwin:** No, no, I don't think that ever happened.

**Mike:** I mean it seems like it was really, just, well planned out. It seemed like on both sides.

**Darwin:** Well, as the college generally wanted to sell it, you had that. You knew that. And they, we don't know whether or not there was another buyer out there. I'm guessing that they did not have another buyer lined up. With us, if we came to a price, then they would have uncertainty until the election, but after the election, they would know they had it sold and they would know we had the money. And so there were reasons we were attractive. Plus, the community relations would be good. And so nobody knew exactly—that's the way it is, everybody holds cards to their chests in these kinds of things, again, I wasn't so concerned about the price except for the political ramifications. But a lot of people, though, were VERY concerned about the price, and politically, that was a big concern. But however it happened, we got to a price, and it was \$8 million, wasn't it?

**Mike:** \$7 million was the final price. And that was what the appraisal was. But then there was five years of interest payments that ended up being--.

**Darwin:** Well that, people need to understand, has nothing to do with the price.

**Mike:** That's true. If, whether we bonded it or made them interest...

**Darwin:** Or you know, if we paid it. If we just went to reserves and paid it. \$7 million. Then, if at the end of five years it would have cost the same thing, whether we were paying somebody interest or not, because that money, if we just put it into the bank it

would draw the interest. People try and add interest onto the price of something—unless the interest is higher than the return that you can get, higher in a substantial amount, it has no effect on the price. People don't believe that, and so when you are in a political battle, they'll say, "Okay, you're paying \$7 million dollars, plus you're paying all this interest, it's really costing you x number of dollars."

**Mike:** Well at one point, though, they, the interest rate was set such that, after five years, it ended up being exactly ten million dollars. So that was maybe why it became...and then they lowered the interest down to a more reasonable rate, so then it ended up being maybe \$8.5 million something.

**Darwin:** But the opponents would always point to the \$8.5, of course.

**Mike:** So it looked to the common person like—

**Darwin:** \$8.5

**Mike:** No, but also, originally it looked like, "We wanted ten million. We're not going to sell it to you for ten million; we're going to sell it to you for seven million, but we're really going to get ten million." That's what it looked like.

**Darwin:** I'm sure that's probably right. And I kind of remember now that you're talking about that, and I certainly remember that the opponents always talked about the price being the payment price plus the interest. It's just like when you buy a home, they'll say, "OK, you pay a hundred thousand for this home, but by the time the thirty years is up, you have paid \$250,000."

**Mike:** Yeah.

**Darwin:** Well, you know, that \$100,000—if you hadn't put it in your home, you'd have \$250,000 in your pocket presumably, if you hadn't put it into a home. But, that, in

reality, the cost the upfront cost is what you're talking about. You've got to compare apples to apples. And so what we were paying for Stephens Lake was the \$7 million, or whatever it was, the \$8.5 is not talking about the purchase price. It's talking about the purchase price plus interest, which complicates the whole thing, and so, really, the argument should be, "What is our purchase price," as long as we're not paying some exorbitant interest. And, but, the opponents would talk about that. We would talk about the purchase price.

**Mike:** Well, and I think Chris Janku pretty skillfully put the whole issue to rest by saying, "We've got two options to purchase this. We can either bond it—" and I think he must have worked with Craig Van Matre quite a bit on this, because the two of them were in total agreement towards the end, and he even said as much, but they worked to make sure the interest rate was exactly what it would cost had the city bonded it instead.

**Darwin:** Yeah. And I don't know if—did Chris work with Craig?

**Mike:** I'm not sure, but the two of them both are, and I don't know if they're working together or not, but Chris made statements that they had worked to, and he didn't say who "they" was, but it had been worked out that whatever it was going to cost the city to bond it, that the other option of paying interest to Stephens Lake would work out to the exact amount of total dollars. So that put that issue to rest.

**Darwin:** I think that was very good. It still didn't keep them from saying it was going to cost \$8.5 million dollars, or whatever.

**Mike:** And then Mr. Campbell said, he came out and said,--

**Darwin:** Was he on the council then?

**Mike:** I believe so. And he said, If we're gonna end up paying interest, I would rather it go to Stephens College, a local business, or a local college, versus paying a bonding organization somewhere else, or interest payment, you know what I mean.

**Darwin:** Which was exactly right. But anyway, I remember --and I remember getting on the telephone and talking to Craig and some others about the price, and I think I laid out my position, that I didn't mind paying that extra money, but we would NOT be able to sell it [the idea to the public]. We've got to have a price where we can go to the public and succeed. And that was, the price, as far as the reality is concerned, has got to be something where we have a decent chance to succeed. And it may be that --that-- I don't know whether it was in there or not (and you can probably get a copy of the survey that was done—) the price may have been part of that. Have you seen a copy of that?

**Mike:** I haven't seen a copy but I remember the newspaper articles talking about, they did specifically ask the question, "Would you support a quarter cent sales tax...would you support a quarter cent sales tax that reverts to an eighth of a cent sales tax...they laid out all kinds of options for people to say, I'll support this; but I won't support that. it was very scientifically—I mean, we had good data to work with.

**Darwin:** We did have good data. Uh huh. And that was a very helpful thing. And that was done by the Trust for Public Lands. And it gave us the encouragement. You know, things looked a little bit scary when you-- we've already talked about the circumstances that existed at the time as to what our chances might possibly be, but that survey was very encouraging, and it also was terrific—it gave us terrific guidance in how to go about this. And I do remember that I was afraid that the business community might come out in significant opposition to this, because the primary issue was the business decision of the

price to pay, and if the business community came to the conclusion that we were paying too much, that it was a terrible business deal, that they might organize an opposition to it and be quite convincing. It would be a little different than the business community saying, "I'm against regulation" or this sort of thing where it's sort of business versus the community. This would be a case you're doing a "we as business people say you are entering into a lousy deal," and I thought, "Oh boy, that would hurt." So when it came time to pick the committee, I was intent on trying to get some significant business people who would agree that we ought to do this. You've got list of the committee. So we were pretty successful at that. And I was very impressed by the activity of some of the business people, and they were true believers in this, and I think that made a big difference in offsetting "you're paying too much."

**Mike:** What did the Chamber [of Commerce] do? Did they take a stance on it?

**Darwin:** I don't remember what the Chamber did. Fred Parry, and what was the name of this, there was a broker, he was pretty articulate, red-headed guy, and I think he was with uh, what was at that time maybe the largest brokerage firms.

**Mike:** Maly?

**Darwin:** No, that was a real-estate broker. This is a stock broker. I can't remember his name. I liked him. He was a...but they went running around, and they made arguments. Their primary argument was the price, I'm sure, but they made all kinds, there were all kinds of arguments that came up, but certainly one of them was the amount of park land that we had. And I did some research on that. I was telling Hank Waters about that the other day. About comparing the amount of park land that Columbia has? And I went and checked the other big college cities, and we're about in the middle. Now then, of course,

then they would count Rock Bridge State Park and things like that, and say, "It's not you, the city administrator, it's the total amount that is available to the public," and probably counted Finger Lakes and everything else.

**Mike:** But then that's a ridiculous comparison, because you could say, "Estes Park is right next to Rocky Mountain National Park" which has like 85 million acres.

**Darwin:** That complicates your, and they can make that in a short statement.

**Mike:** And I remember there were ads that ran that stated, "Columbia has more park land than any other city in the country."

**Darwin:** --Which wasn't true.

**Mike:** Not true at all.

**Darwin:** But people read that ad and they're not hearing you deny that as they read that ad so they believe it. And then they've got to hear you sometime when you're denying that, and they may never hear you, and so --yeah there was some blatant mis-statements in the opposition advertising. Another thing, they were trying to say that the lake was polluted. And they of course went back to, I've mentioned it before, it had been a golf course and all this awful stuff had washed into the lake and the lake was polluted. I finally overcame that by going down to the dock and I got one of the television stations to come out. I just took a cup of water and drank it, right out of the lake, in front of them.

**Mike:** It was tested before that, I believe. Didn't it [pass the] test for water quality before that?

**Darwin:** I don't know. I think it had, but I'm not sure about that. But anyway, I did that, and of course I thought, "If I get sick, this is going to be bad!" [laughs] And, you know, gave all kinds of speeches and went to all the civic clubs, all the radio, all the television;

it was a big controversy. But it boiled down, to a large extent, to, did we have—are we spending too much on parks? We just got through buying the ARC, now we’re going out and buying this other thing, and then, and not only that, we’re paying a ridiculous price. And I was talking to somebody who had been a big supporter of mine over the years—just the other day. She’s in real estate. And she says, “I just LOVE that Stephens Lake Park.” And I said, “Isn’t that a great thing?” And she says, “You know, we paid too much for it.” It still lingers! That argument that we paid too much. So that was a very dangerous argument. And, but we did have an appraisal, and we got it, we were able to stand on the appraisal. I know another thing that happened in that election: they went after the Trust for Public Land. And they accused the Trust for Public Lands of being dishonest, honestly. They said the Trust for Public Lands cooked up an unfair appraisal somehow. And I guess it was, it must have been done by local appraisers--

**Mike:** It was a firm out of St. Louis.

**Darwin:** Okay. Well they then accused the Trust for Public Lands of coming in here and cooking up an unfair appraisal, and making a deal to get public land, which is their objective, so they’ll get paid. That’s what they were saying. So they’ll get paid. And that these outsiders are coming in here, they’re cooking up this rotten deal, so they’ll get paid and get out of here. And I think that that really bothered the Trust for Public Lands. They had not faced that kind of criticism in all their things that they had done. But I mean the opponents really went after them.

**Mike:** There weren’t many opponents that I can tell from reading, but the ones that there were were extremely vocal and took out ads. Mitch Moore is somebody—

**Darwin:** Oh, yeah.

**Mike:** -- who ran full page ads, or , and I'm not sure, I need to research a little closer, if they were in the yellow pages—

**Darwin:** -- he did a lot in that yellow pages, in the the free-

**Mike:** yeah, and I remember that argument coming out

**Darwin:** he had a lot of nice things to say about me. [laughs]

**Mike:** I'd not heard of the guy before then or after that, but he was very vocal at that time.

**Darwin:** He was very vocal in the ARC election,

**Mike:** so it maybe got him stirred up.

**Darwin:** yeah. He and I kind of got in a fairly stiff argument over the ARC election, and I think there was sort of a personal vendetta to that as well, but I'm not sure, but I get along fine with him now, as far as I can tell, but they pulled out a lot of arguments. But we won by a pretty large margin, didn't it?

**Mike:** I think it was 53%. IT wasn't as wide as you might think.

**Darwin:** The real Achilles Heel was whether we were paying too much, I think.

**Mike:** What was the critical role of the Coalition to save Stephens' Lake

**Darwin:** Well it was absolutely critical. It was like so many other things. The, you know, you can't make much progress without popular support, and they, this, this started on its own, in other words these were Barbara and her colleagues and that, just started off. They smelled that something might happen to this park, which was in their neighborhood, essentially, and they organized. And so they immediately provided a base of community support, and that is absolutely critical. And if the council were doing this in a completely isolated way, and said, OK, we've just finished the ARC, we don't have



the money, we've had this...we had the library going on, and didn't see community support for this, I'm not sure that it would have ever made it to the ballots, and so the community support was very significant, and while I appointed a ballot committee, that was a committee, and those people worked hard, and, but you had the CARE group, is that what they call themselves?

**Mike:** The CARE group is what the ballot group called themselves.

**Darwin:** Oh, OK. And it may be that the two kind of melded together. I've kind of forgotten--

**Mike:** Well, there was overlap. Some--

**Darwin:** Certainly it takes some of those people to be on the official committee, but the citizens group was out there...the ballot committee is not going to be going door to door, but the citizens group does that kind of thing, and it took, it absolutely had to have both of them, and so, it is absolutely critical, no question about it. And, so, they deserve a huge amount of credit. And--

**Mike:** Well it seems like you had two things going on. You had the city manager and city council working together to come up with a plan for how it could be funded.

**Darwin:** Yeah. Well that of course had to be done at the political management level--

**Mike:** -- with the college. And then you had the citizen advocacy that sold the ballot issue.

**Darwin:** Well, but they also helped sell the city council.

**Mike:** That's a good point.

**Darwin:** About them—the city council may have put it on anyway. I would have been for it. I'm sure Chris Yonker would have been for it. Barbara wasn't on the council then. Probably Rex Campbell would have been for it.

**Mike:** John John was on the council then. Almeta Creighton.

**Darwin:** Now John John—I don't think John John was for it.

**Mike:** He was for a permanent—this is just my speculation—he was for a permanent parks sales tax, a quarter cent, that just goes on forever, because I think he wanted to sell the Phillips property to the city.

**Darwin:** Well, I don't know.

**Mike:** That was my speculation (laughs), but I think he was representing the Phillips property.

**Darwin:** I thought he—did he vote FOR putting it on the ballot?

**Mike:** I think so. At one point, he voted against something, but I don't recall exactly what it was, but--

**Darwin:** I think he represented that he thought we were paying too much for it.

**Mike:** I think so. But he was okay with putting it to the voters. I think it was unanimous to put it before the voters, but there were other issues—I think it was how it would be funded or exactly how the sales tax would be worded—that he may have voted against that, because he felt it should just be a quarter cent forever, not reverting back to an eighth of a cent after five years.

**Darwin:** Of course, I would have liked to have a quarter cent forever, too.

**Mike:** And I think the survey said that wouldn't pass.

**Darwin:** I think that is right. Yeah. I think that is right, and that is why we went the way we did. Cause I would definitely have gone for a quarter of a cent forever, although in some ways, it may be better that we don't have that because we'd get so used to it, and then we'd start wanting more.

**Mike:** And also I think it's nice, and again, this is just me talking as a Parks person, that we have to come up with a specific plan each five years about how it will be--

**Darwin:** I think that's right--

**Mike:** And we can change that, depending on how our focus is on more taking care of what we have, and that was important on this last ballot issue. Anyway, that's getting off the subject.

**Darwin:** Well, things do change from time to time. The city expands rapidly. And you have to acquire more property. If it has to remain within its confines then you develop what you've got. I know I worked really really hard on that election, you know, I was trying to practice law and serve as mayor—

**Mike:** How long had you been mayor when this happened?

**Darwin:** Not too long, I suppose. What year was it?

**Mike:** 2000? '99 or 2000?

**Darwin:** I was elected in '95.

**Mike:** You were elected in '95, so you had some experience. Alrighty. Well, my last question is something we already kind of talked about too: when did discussions begin, because it seemed like in May 2000 a deal had already been worked out about how it could be funded, but we've already kind of talked about all that. Um, is there anything else that you want to share? I've taken more than enough of your time.

**Darwin:** Oh, no! It's fun to talk about. And I think maybe I've kind of gone through—probably laid out most of the opposition arguments: cost, {????} because they argued that they really didn't know what we were getting—they thought that the lake—there were questions about the stability of the dam; there were questions about the pollution; all this sort of thing that they raised without any scientific basis to raise them, but they could raise them in the political scene, and that's all they had to do is say the damn is questionable, that the pollution is questionable, so you're buying a pig in a poke.

**Mike:** The citizens hadn't been allowed to be on the property.

**Darwin:** I don't remember that particular --

**Mike:** -- towards the end, there were several open houses, so the people could actually get out and--

**Darwin:** Oh, I remember we did that, too, cause they had said something about that. The people couldn't go out and see it, and so we did the open houses, and everybody went out and loved what they saw, and then it turned out that that went really well for us.

**Mike:** "Would you buy a car if you couldn't test drive it?" That's what they said.

**Darwin:** And of course the price, they used the argument about the Trust for Public Lands, being, somebody from the outside came in here to line their own pocket and walk away with it. So, those were some of the major arguments that I can remember.

**Mike:** Oh—another big one was pitting parks against police.

**Darwin:** Oh, yeah. That's right. Yeah. And that, of course, is always an effective argument. Priorities are wrong.

**Mike:** That was probably one of the biggest. That was Fred Parry's biggest push. In fact, he was asking the council to place a ballot issue on this same ballot to work jointly with the county for more police officers and funding the county jail.

**Darwin:** You know, I had kind of forgotten about that.

**Mike:** That was a big deal.

**Darwin:** Yeah, I'm sure it was a big deal, and he's tried that several times. In elections that followed, always saying that our priorities are wrong, and we need more police and more fire [fighters]. You know, public safety is always a high item in people's mind, so it's a fairly effective tactic. On our side, of course, ...this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. You take it, or it's gone. What are your grandchildren going to say when they look at this? And that was the apartments and shopping center and all this stuff and it could have been something that could have lasted forever and benefited the community. And that may have been the very strongest, and the Central Park type argument, and I think those were really strengths. Basically, it's something that if we don't take it now, it's gone forever....was our strongest point. And then a lot of the other was defensive. Wait a minute. Well...as a matter of fact, we're "park poor," and we still were at that point, in my opinion, "park poor." The lake is fine. Although we didn't have engineering studies on the dam and we may have had some kind of test on the water.

Mike: There eventually were some done, before the ballot issue. And it tested fine.

**Darwin:** And I don't remember.

**Mike:** You and Chris Janku both, when that police issue came up, you stated that passing this park ballot issue does not negatively affect the police department. It's not a zero-sum game. This does not negatively affect the police department. And then Chris

Janku also had statistics at that council meeting to say that it's not fair that we're neglecting police and fire and roads and he had numbers of exactly how much would be spent on those and it was tens of millions that would be spent on roads and fire in the next ten years. He came equipped with those numbers so that he could say, you know it's not fair that we're neglecting these. We're actually funding them very well.

**Darwin:** Chris was very good at that kind of thing. But that was still defensive. So we were having to defend against charges that really weren't justified, but you'd spend your time defending. And you rarely win an election just by defending. You've got to defend, and those were great defenses, but you've got to have a positive, and the positive I think was, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity and it will be gone, and what about your grandkids type thing. And that was our positive.

**Mike:** Yeah that's a good point.

**Darwin:** And, you know, so if you're just saying okay we've gotta show why we need to act and act now. In one sense, by having a deadline, you know, there'd be some things we would say, like, maybe other means of financing or what's the condition of the dam, and we just couldn't get the information with the time left, and so, but on the, we would just have to say, you know, we have no reason to think...and so that gave them an opportunity to make charges that they knew we would be weak on the defense on because of the time limitation.

**Mike:** But also the timing may have worked better--

**Darwin:** --it may have worked to our advantage, as well. Because if we don't do it now, it's gone.

**Mike:** And also, just, it, it, it forced it to...come to a resolution. It forced some resolution.

**Darwin:** Yeah. And so, in the long run, it's been wonderful for the community. And I think there are some interesting things about it. It's...I remember when the IBM people were here, we took them on a bus to show them Stephens Park. "Wow, that's a beautiful thing." People are VERY impressed by that park. I think it's helped Columbia's sense of pride. It's also helped us pass other park issues, because it's been so well done that the people have confidence that we will do well with all our parks. I take people out to Cosmo Park, Stephens Lake Park, Flat Branch Park, and maybe a neighborhood park somewhere--

**Mike:** -- and the trail.

**Darwin:** --And the trail, obviously. And people say, "Wow." And so, I do think that passing that, and the ARC, every day it's... I have people come up to me about the trail, Stephens Lake Park and the ARC. And a lot of them will say, "I voted against that! But I LOVE it!"

**Mike:** you know another interesting...this is more of a personal interest; we're pretty much done with the questions I had, but ....another twist I wish I could take on this, and I have to limit it, on what I can talk about, but, the people that thought we greatly overdeveloped Stephens Lake Park. You know, there were a lot of people that wanted it to be purchased and left exactly the way it was.

**Darwin:** That's what's going on out here at the Bonnie View Park.

**Mike:** Exactly. But Stephens. Remember, even Barbara Hoppe said, "Leave that dirt path on the North side of the lake. Let's just leave it the way it is. And our own thoughts

were, there's going to be thousands of people using this, and we have to accommodate our users.

**Darwin:** I think parks are parks. They're for the people. And you want to accommodate as many people that are appropriate to parks as you can. And a certain number of those people have disabilities. They don't want to get their feet muddy and wet. They're going to want to be on a surface that is maintained, and so...you want to set up your park so that people who enjoy nature can find a place, people who enjoy gardens, people who want an outdoor theater, people who enjoy the lake...you want to set up your park...you need to have some athletic fields I think on most parks. That doesn't mean that it should be all athletic fields by any means. But a single purpose park is only serving a certain portion of your community. Now, you know, and this was, the grass roots part of this was very significant. And the work accomplished by the council that was in place at that time—the city manager, and the mayor, I'll say that, as far as the council, I think were really fairly remarkable that they managed to put all this together at the time pressures that were in place, and get this done. And I kind of think that at some point, there ought to be some recognition to the way that was done. And of course your paper will do that; your thesis will do that...

**Mike:** But it could very well be that nobody ever reads it. Most theses are not...

**Darwin:** But I've often thought that they really dropped the ball when they didn't put up a plaque that gave the list of citizen leadership and so forth and so on.

**Mike:** You know, maybe that could be a component of the Hindman Discovery Garden.

**Darwin:** I don't know that it ought to do that.



**Mike:** Because part of the Hindman Discovery Garden is talking about—you know the Council Ring, for example, maybe you could talk a little –I mean obviously, it’s going to talk about your service to Columbia as the longest serving mayor, and other things that you’ve done...

**Darwin:** Well I was thinking maybe of something that would be over by the –where the people approach the park or something...

**Mike:** A historic plaque?

**Darwin:** Something to meet the ten year anniversary or whatever it is. I just sort of think that ...and I think it’s good for parks to give recognition to councils and so forth that put these in, cause I think it stimulates them to do more.

**Mike:** Yeah.

**Darwin:** And I don’t need it. I mean, I’ve been recognized over and over again. But you know, people like the Citizens Committee...they don’t get recognition for what they’ve done. They ought to. They worked hard on this thing. It was a pretty significant accomplishment. I think that a lot of people would say, well of course, the ARC was a significant citizens’ accomplishment. The people who worked on the ARC, they’ve never really gotten recognized, either.

**Mike:** That’s, I’ll bring that up to—

**Darwin:** You know, my name, the council’s name, the city manager’s name are up in the park. But the rest of the people—there are a lot of people who really worked hard. And, I don’t know, one of the problems you may have is how do you, where do you draw the line, and all that kind of thing. But I think some people would be interested in ...

**Mike:** I think you're right--

**Darwin:** --knowing that someday.

**Mike:** It does make it more likely that people are willing to sign up to serve on that committee in the future when it's needed.

**Darwin:** I think so.

**Mike:** That's a good point.

**Darwin:** But anyway---and I'm not fishing for something for me, because I've gotten lots and lots of recognition, but I think a lot of people put in a lot of stuff on this and they don't get any recognition. And in this case, putting it on the ballot and working for it, the council and the manager deserve some recognition for Stephens Lake Park, I believe.

**Mike:** Yeah.

**Darwin:** That's just a thought, but--

**Mike:** That's a good point. I'm just always amazed that --

**Darwin:** But I'm very excited about the garden! That's terrific.

**Mike:** I'm always amazed that our council members and mayor do it completely voluntarily. It's amazing to me, how much time they donate to the city. It's really truly--

**Darwin:** That's true. Of course there are lots of other places where people donate fantastic amounts in a much quieter way. And, but, it is pretty remarkable. And you're under certain public scrutiny and pressures that...

**Mike:** Sure...

**Darwin:** It's not easy to just come in and say I can walk away from that [the scrutiny].

END OF TAPE.

Appendix E  
Interview with Craig Van Matre  
June 18, 2011

**Mike:** Okay. Well, first thing is: Would you reflect on the months leading up to the ballot issue? That's not as relevant for you, because your role was even way before that.

**VanMatre:** Yeah. Um, first, I'll just give you some background. Okay. Craig A. VanMatre. I'm at 450 W. Covered Bridge Road, Columbia, MO, 65203. Born November 2, 1945. Licensed to practice law September 13, 1970. [I was] in the air force for four years. [I] started practicing law in Columbia November 15, 1974. Did general practice, but gradually—I have a Master's [degree] in Law and Taxation but I always wanted to be a business lawyer, and, after—but I also wanted to live in Columbia, MO, and so there weren't that many opportunities to do *pure* business law here, so I gradually evolved into a real estate lawyer for—I did a lot of work as a real estate developer, because that was the principal—and I represent large medical groups and corporations that have a number of employees, and so on, but if I had a specialty here in Columbia, it was probably real estate development, and particularly helping people get zoning and planning done that got through the system and allowed people to use land to its highest and best use. Now the best is not the word that a lot of people would choose to apply to the developments that I've helped, because they don't want to see commercial developments, but obviously, the town puts up so many road blocks that it's very difficult to navigate a system without the assistance of a lawyer, so, over the years, I gradually gained a reputation for helping people who wanted to do development.

[pause for drinks]

**VanMatre:** I didn't really pay much attention to Stephens College. It had always been there. When I was at the University [of Missouri], occasionally, I'd have a date with a Stephens girl-- when I was in undergraduate school, but I didn't pay too much attention to the college. But I think it was in 1997, I got a call from Marcia Kurst, who was then the president of the college, and she asked me to come over and talk about the fact that Stephens was in a fairly serious financial situation and needed to monetize some of their assets, just as, kind of a--sell something to keep things going. The problem with Stephens Park and Stephens College was that it was a money drain. It was a nice facility but the golf course --there was a nine-hole golf course, and then the lake, of course...and the operational cost of keeping that thing up and insured and mowed and policed was a net loser... and the girls at Stephens—it's a predominately girls' school—could only use the lake maybe the month of September and part of October, and then again, maybe in May, and the rest of the time it was a place you could have picnics and so on but you couldn't really count on being able to use the lake. The golf course had lots of competition around town, and it had priced itself pretty low so that the course itself, just the maintenance and expense of maintaining it were much greater than the revenue they were driving, and so, they were looking at different assets [to monetize]. They were looking at--there was an old auditorium and they were looking at --there was a multi-story dorm that's over here, pretty close to Boone Hospital Center, and earlier, I had been involved in this...

[phone rings, interrupts his train of thought]

**VanMatre:** Another asset that Stephens had was this larger tract of land immediately east of Boone Hospital Center, and between Stephens Lake Park. It was between Old Highway 63 and –I don't know quite the name of the street there, and it is where Boone Hospital, through a partnership with some people up in Iowa, had built four big medical office buildings. But that used to be owned by Stephens. And the first building that was built on that campus was this, it was called Stephens Park Medical Building...it was the very first one...it's the one immediately west of the new cancer...the new office that houses the cancer doctors...but the doctors who engineered that, and who built on that building, were my clients. And the whole project involved the hospital buying the land and then doing a long-term land-lease on that. And so I had been sort of peripherally involved in looking at the titles of the real estate for Stephens and so on. So I came over and talked to Marcia, and she said, we've got some odd payments; we're operating at a deficit and need to sell something, and looking at all these assets we've got, what do you think would be the most marketable, and I said well, without a doubt, Stephens Lake Park because you're looking at about 120 acres there...117 or something like that. Great infrastructure nearby, and you could do a multi-use development down there where you had commercial, office and residential and build it out over a period of five or six years, and it'd be almost a full time job for a decent-sized developer, but it'd be very do-able because, you know, at that point in time, the town was growing, and it looked like there was plenty of opportunity to utilize that land. So, we checked into it; of course it was zoned...I think it was zoned R-1 Residential. But there was high-density residential and

commercial around it, and so we immediately filed...well, not immediately, but, the first thing she said was, "Isn't there going to be a lot of opposition?" I said, "Well, from the perspective of Stephens, you don't care who pays you money, as long as the money you get paid is equivalent to the value (of the land) that we put on there. So I had a couple of appraisers come out there. We got appraisals all the way from \$3 million to \$10 million. So I chose to take the \$10 million dollar appraisal and sort of let it be known among the people in our town that we wanted to sell the property and we thought it was worth \$10 million dollars. Almost instantly, the people that were affiliated with the faculty of Stephens College and downtown management said, "Oh, we can't let this jewel get away from us; it will be a disaster if this turns into some kind of development. We need the city to buy it." And...um.

[Long pause.]

**Mike:** ...Did Stephens do a Master Plan before this came up? I remember seeing a Master plan where they said they were going to purchase some properties internal, or, you know, kind of consolidate internally and sell off perimeter properties, or did that come after this deal?

**VanMatre:** It's all part of rationalizing Stephens' Mission and finances and geography. I mean just parenthetically. They had some nice people as presidents, but a fellow named Arnold Christianer? was president for awhile, and he decided that he didn't care if people made contributions to the college or not, he wasn't he wasn't asking anybody for it; if they wanted to give money, fine, but otherwise, there was not going to be any

coordinated fundraising. And as education evolved, and as the college's finances became more and more precarious, and as they did less and less maintenance on the buildings, they had enormous deferred maintenance on those buildings...he gradually stopped being president. I can't remember. He stopped being president. And then Leslie Stamper? was president after that, and she didn't do any fundraising, and so Marcia Kurst didn't do any fundraising to speak of, but she was the first one, I think, to recognize the dire straits and that was when they started selling the stuff off in order to—they were kind of, in effect, “eating their seed corn” to keep the school alive. Stephens didn't turn around until – Well, right now, the president—Diane Lynch—is a great president for them –very sharp, very interesting and very astute, financially,...and before her was...Libby...I can't think of her name...Libby, Libby, Libby..., and when she was hired, she didn't really have a decent CFO or any decent financial statements; Stephens didn't give them to her. And she commanded, but she didn't know exactly what their true financial situation was. After she found out, she wasn't shy about telling people that she never would have become president had she known what bad shape the college was in. But they kind of disguised it by, with the sale of this park, which tided the college over during that period of time between when it sold and when Linda(Libby) came. But when Linda (Libby) came, the college was just one step away from bankruptcy. And it wasn't until she put it on sound financial footing and started an aggressive fundraising campaign that was finally followed up on by Diane that the college really turned around, and now, I think it is just fine; enrollment is growing. But they have constricted . They've focused on how to pay for things. At that point, they had all these assets—at that time, they weren't paying any attention to them. There was just no doubt that they couldn't afford to keep

that park. But, it also was a disappointment to me when I talked to city-wide development financiers because they didn't want to pay enough for the dirt. Because they looked at it and said, "You know, it's probably only worth three- or four- million dollars to us because there's a lot of land there but there's a lot of risks associated with getting it resolved. It could be a three or four year process to get it resolved." It was hugely controversial. There's no infrastructure throughout the site, so you're going to have huge costs of bringing water, sewer, electricity to the size that you need to get it done. Draining the lake was going to involve the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers and permitting and all from them, and so I really think that the highest offer from a developer that we got was, "You know, it might be worth AS much as three million dollars BUT"—and it really was—it wasn't like they were enthusiastic about it. What they wanted somebody else to do was – or the college --to carve it up into small bites, get the zoning, and then sell it out in 20 acre parcels for a specific purpose, get it zoned multi-family and also get five or six acres that you could put a department store on and that kind of thing. So, you know. I was really disappointed to learn that the developers, who were obviously successful because they had calculators who added and subtracted and were looking at it, but meantime, there was this groundswell of people that wanted to buy the park for the city. And so, we quickly realized that the best thing we could do was polish up that deal, make them think that we were hot to sell it to anybody; we were going to drain the lake and get this all done. And so, at that point in time, then, there got to be lots and lots of meetings with lots and lots of different people. I'd go over to the college, and there was some environmental group that had some idea that they could be people involved, helping people get tax deductions and something like that.



**Mike:** Trust for Public Land?

**VanMatre:** Yeah, something like that. It made no sense, but they were at the table. Various city council people were at the table. I don't recall Barbara Hoppe, but I do recall Darwin Hindman being intimately involved. The Parks and Rec people were looking at it, saying, "Boy, we could really do a lot with this park." And what we decided we would do was put, was say, well we know it's worth \$10 million bucks. If you'll give us \$7 ½ million, we'll take it." And the city did a bunch of math, did a bunch of dickering around, and they just couldn't get there. They were going to put a parks tax on it...I think it was a quarter cent or a half cent parks tax they needed to get passed in order to enter negotiations. They couldn't get too ..... I think they wound up with I'm trying to remember the exact... but I remember that I said to the Stephens people, Look, a lease payment from the city can be treated like a bond payment and will be tax exempt. So if I can get the city to pay four or five percent interest, in effect, on a lease payment, then what we'll do is we'll let the city have five years to build up money through this park tax that they can use to pay us, and they'll pay us rent, in the meantime, that is equal to—my recollection is that it was somewhere in the neighborhood of six million, 750 thousand...

**Mike:** I think the final asking price was seven million and then with the lease payments, it ended up being about \$8 ½ million total. \$300,000 or something was the interest payment over five years.

**VanMatre:** Yeah, but –um.

**Mike:** The college held firm at \$10 million for a long time.

**VanMatre:** We held at \$10 million for a long time, but privately, we all agreed that if we could net \$7.5 [million], that would get the college what they needed to get on their feet financially. So the problem was how to get the \$7.5, and I just don't remember the parts. It was either \$6 million 850 or \$7 million 150...it was somewhere in the range of \$7 million bucks. But they agreed that they would rent it five years before they purchased it. And it seems like that annual rental they were paying was two hundred fifty thousand a year, give or take. Well, immediately after we closed on the deal, and I had the lease. I sold the lease through a brokerage firm, and, I think we got a million dollars for the lease. In other words, the value of the lease as just a conduit for five years, because it was tax exempt interest, had a present value of about a million bucks. So with the-- and then the county was going to pay \$7 million for the land at the end of the lease period. I don't remember the exact figures. So, we basically got a million dollars for the lease and seven million for the land in five years. So we had two, we had an immediate payday of the million dollars, and then we had with option to purchase that the city was sure to exercise at the end of five years, that...

**Mike:** So the million was able to tide the college over for five years?

**VanMatre:** No, I think what happened was—the lease--We wound up negotiating the lease so that the city was *obligated* to buy it at the end of five years. They had five years to raise the money. So I'm pretty sure we were able to sell the lease and the contract through a brokerage firm for almost eight million dollars.

**Mike:** Oh, I see.

**VanMatre:** Because the, it was, they knew they were going to get \$7 million dollars at the end of five years; they also knew they were going to get \$350,000 in interest, each year for the five years, and it would be tax exempt interest. So from an investor's point of view, that was better than—it was like a five year bond... that was going to pay off in five years and with tax exempt income, and so, because it was a high enough interest rate in effect...you know, the prevailing interest rate at the time, it seems like it was —the taxable rate was about seven percent, and so...they were willing to pay up for it, so the college got \$8 million bucks, give or take, okay? And so that's what they used to tide it over. The, and people, Fred Parry and a bunch of people would write to the Trib and call into the radio and stuff like that —they were just horrified that they were over paying for the property and it wasn't worth that... that they had talked to developers and nobody would pay that. But, needless to say, it's an asset to the city right now. God, it's worth \$120 million bucks. You couldn't replace it. It's that close to town, as many people that use it for all the amenities...it's just a huge asset. But it wasn't without its detractors who said, "We can't afford it; we shouldn't be doing it." But the voters just passed the tax.

And everybody knew, when they passed the tax, they were passing the tax so they of yes to no was 45-55.

**Mike:** I think it was 54—something like that—54-46 or in that range. Very close. So did the college celebrate after the ballot issue passed, or was there kind of a get together?

**VanMatre:** It was NOT a celebration. I got patted on the back and was told it was job well done, and you know, “Thanks,” and “We sure appreciate it,” but the alums were PISSED because they remembered going there as college kids, and nobody had told them the college was in dire financial straits. Nobody gave them a chance to kick in money and keep it going. It just sold. Marcia’s relationship with both the faculty and alums was not very good. AND so, when she left nobody was...Stephens was ...she did what she had to do, she thought, but she didn’t really let the alums know that they were about to lose this park that they remembered going to. And they have some wealthy alums that could have written a check, but for some reason or another, they didn’t want to advertise that they were hurting, because they thought that might hurt their enrollment.

**Mike:** You mention Darwin Hindman as being one of the key people involved...

**VanMatre:** Without a doubt, Darwin was one of the key people. He was the guy that...he was the mayor, most influential. He walked around and got the votes lined up for city council and appeared on all the local radio shows and talked to the newspapers.

**Mike:** Was there anybody else? The Trust for Public Lands –they ended up doing an appraisal that I think came in at around \$7 million, and so that added some credibility...

**VanMatre:** All I remember them doing as a practical matter which assisted us was gave us a subpoena...of reasonableness on our price.

**Mike:** I think they also polled the citizens to see what would be the most acceptable means of purchasing the property—or what method...whether sales tax or property tax. I think they polled the public to come up with some kind of determination that the parks sales tax would be the most likely to pass. I think they also did something along those lines.

**VanMatre:** Oh yeah. Darwin generated a bunch of public appeal. If Darwin had been lukewarm on it, it never would have happened.

**Mike:** Is there anybody else that was key? Anybody that almost stopped the process? Anybody that was, I don't know, played an important role in any way, for or against?

**VanMatre:** You know, I had hundreds of memos and notes. I don't think I was e-mailing back then...letters, summaries of meetings, they would probably refresh my memory on that if I went and got out the file. Fred Parry was sort of the head of the opposition. It seems like Al Germond was on his side in the sense that Al was opposed to ....

**Mike:** I remember Al Price played a role, too.

**VanMatre:** Yeah. There were these people that. sort of the downtown chamber of commerce types, a little older, who just couldn't see how the city could afford it, you know, there were things the city needed to spend money on instead, you know, the streets and sewers and infrastructure. But there was not an organized opposition. It was disorganized. People sniping around. The proponents were SO well organized. The people that Darwin had enlisted on the park tax...Naomi Cupp and Greg Steinhoff...

**Mike:** They had a thirty-seven member committee appointed by Darwin Hindman that...the CARE committee, I think they called themselves, to educate the public about the process.

**VanMatre:** Darwin was without a doubt...there was Darwin and there were people under Darwin. It wasn't like there was anybody else of consequence.

**Mike:** How about City Manager Ray Beck?

**VanMatre:** Ray--you have to know Ray. Ray's a nice guy. Ray was very astute politically in the sense that he could gently guide the council members, but he knew that when there was a fray(?) that he needed to be the drum major that he needed to help. And when there was something that Darwin wanted, something that seemed ideal at the

time then he wasn't going to block it. He spent a lot of time negotiating the financial aspects. Darwin wasn't involved in the finances. He wanted to get us a price that they could afford to pay. ...? The impetus was Darwin. Darwin saying, "We gotta get this done." To people just wandering around downtown, being so enthusiastic about it.

**Mike:** Was there any point in the process where you thought the whole thing was going to fall apart?

**VanMatre:** No. No, I felt like if we got hung up on the price, I would be able to pursue it...I just never had to pursue that hard. Christmas come early, pie in the sky was \$10 million. But \$7 ½ million was always the target. Anything better than \$7 ½ million was just great. I'm trying to think if we ever had any bumps in the road there. I mean, in the early stages, Ray Beck said "No, man, I don't see how we could pay much more than \$3 million, \$3 ½ million for this thing...that's what everybody tells me it's worth." And I said "Ray, we're wasting our time." I went out and got those diagrams that showed if the lake was paved and full of apartments and office buildings and stuff like that. *The Missourian* ran them in full color. I think the *Trib* did, too. Maybe lesser, but I remember it was front page on the *Missourian*, those plans. I mean, people were up in ARMS!

**Mike:** So that was critical to the plan—proposing an alternate use --or being ready for an alternate use--

**VanMatre:** --making people think that we were going to sell it to a developer that was going to rape and pillage. It had to have a credible alternative. You can't sell anything if someone thinks they're the only buyer. You'll just never get what you need.

**Mike:** And it seems like the citizens of Columbia were extremely emotionally attached to that property. Darwin said it was the only place to go swimming when he was a kid. It was the only place to go swimming. Douglass Pool wasn't there...

**VanMatre:** Yeah, I don't know about that. There were strip pits in close proximity....but you're probably right. But, you know, if you talk to all the...if you lined up all the people who swam there as a kid....it would probably be about 5 %.

**Mike:** Really?

**VanMatre:** Yeah! Columbia, in 1960, was a town of about 20,000 people.

**Mike:** Wow.

**VanMatre:** And that's when Darwin was a kid, you know, the 1950's. And there was Quarry Lake over at Quarry Heights.

**Mike:** He told me that was still an active quarry when he was a kid.



**VanMatre:** Quarry Heights? Could be.

**Mike:** I asked him that same question: I said, “What about the quarry?” I grew up over there, close to that area. . He said it was still an active quarry. So was there a certain point when the college agreed to lower the price from \$10 million to \$7 million? Was there a certain--

**VanMatre:** It was when we, when the city said they would do this lease purchase—lease it for five years and then purchase it. So I could turn it into a bond. They felt like that justified them telling people, “We’re paying \$7 ½ million for it, which is what the Trust for Public Land said...” because we had at this impasse. I said, “I need \$8 million.” They said, “We gotta have \$7 million. We can only pay \$7 million.” And so, when I came up with this lease idea, they were able to say with a straight face, “Well, we’re paying \$7 million for it; we’re just paying rent on it in the meantime.” And they felt like they could sell that as something that allowed them to pay the equivalent of \$7 million dollars for it. But the way the lease was structured, I could monetize the lease for another million bucks. And so, the college got \$ eight [million] and nobody knew about it. But nobody knew that the college wound up with about \$8 million in net benefit, whereas the city is saying, “We paid \$7 million for it, which is what the Trust for Public Lands says it’s worth.”

29:00

**Mike:** The date that was set, you know, there was a specific date chosen. Was that chosen because the college just had to have the money by that time? Or was it set because you just knew that if there wasn't a date set, it would dilly dally on for years and years?

**VanMatre:** Well, at first, as I recall, the closing date was fairly quickly after the election.

**Mike:** I think you gave them the first right of refusal until the day after the ballot issue.

**VanMatre:** Right.

**Mike:** November 7 was the ballot issue, and you said, "We need to know by November 8."

**VanMatre:** Oh, yeah, I mean, if, when you're involved in real estate, there's just one other person in line after another. You know I'm involved in a deal now where I'm going to have to threaten to effect a law suit in order to get people off the dime. If you give people forever, they'll take forever on these kinds of things. If you give – really, in the golden days of real estate, if the buyer knew that he had a tenant lined up that wanted to go on that location—if he had a major tenant that wanted to go on that real estate, like a Wal-Mart or some big store that wanted to have the store open a year from today, then you were in a rush to close. But if it was spec, and you could tie the property up on a

contractor and then go out and try to find tenants, until you reached that critical mass where you have enough signed leases saying, "When you build it, I will occupy it, and I will pay you this much rent"-- Until you have that critical mass, you want to stall as long as you can, and so if you're a seller, you're sitting there thinking, "Geez, when's this guy gonna close." If you're a dumb developer you sign a contract that only gives you about sixty or ninety days or something like that and it's not nearly enough time. But if you're an astute developer, what you do is you sign contracts that allow you to extend the closing date by paying realtors small sums of money for a long period of time and you're never really obligated to close until you've got all kinds of time to go out there and find things, find tenants. And, God, as I recall, I'm just trying to think. We, it took us damn near two and a half years to get the closing done on the property on Grindstone because we sat on a contract to buy it contingent on re-zoning and it took us a long time to get re-zoning. The property, the Wal-Mart over on Broadway and Fairview...that was a five year project. We had that property basically tied up for over five years before we finally got zoning and closed. And part of that was, there was some peripheral houses that had to be bought and those sellers had to be tied up and so that's always the situation, even with the city. You know, they don't want to part with their money until it's absolutely necessary. They don't want to commit until it's absolutely necessary, so we just started creating some deadlines.

**Mike:** Was there any discussion with city manager or Darwin about choosing a national election date, rather than...I think there was a senator election and a presidential election or a primary or something like that.

**VanMatre:** We could have done it in August; we could have done it in November. That was a deliberate decision...go with the general because you'll get a lot better turn out. And the turn out on the primary date tends to be conservative. It tends to be the older voter, the more conservative voter. And I think, I don't remember who knew that, but it seems like it was Beck. Ray Beck said, "If we're going to have a chance of getting this park tax passed, we need to do it in a general election when you've got a large turn-out, because if you vote on the primary election date of August or you vote on a city council election, you're not going to get near as many numbers. "

**Mike:** That make sense. I assumed that was the case but--

**VanMatre:** That wasn't me that knew that. I'm pretty sure it was Ray Beck.

**Mike:** How important do you think the role of the coalition of neighborhood associations and environmental groups was in swaying the public or the council to act?

**VanMatre:** Well, it's kind of like saying, "What was the role of the fifth army in World War II." It's damned important but without the air force and without the navy, you have all of these people you need to deploy to get out the word and motivate people and talk about how great it is. I mean you're talking mostly numbers there. Now, the environmental groups were already persuaded. They were the choir you were preaching to. You weren't trying to motivate them. What you were trying to do was to get them to go out and help the—it was always a bell-shaped curve. Cause you've got people who are

*really* interested, and they're motivated, and they're like 5-10% of the populace, and there's the great unwashed that don't give a damn...they're in the middle. They've got kids to take to school, and they're like, "Stephens Lake? Now where's that? Oh, yeah. God, do we ever use that, honey?" Then over here on the other hand are the people on the right who are saying "No taxes, no way, no how. We're spending too much money on taxes." And so it's just a mass of people in the middle you've got to motivate. The people on the fringes are going to vote for or against you and there's not a damn thing you can do about it. But the great mass of people in the middle, they're the ones you've got to activate, and that takes going door to door, and people putting up posters, and making telephone calls, and that's when those groups helped.

**Mike:** I'm trying to think....

**VanMatre:** It's like a campaign. you've got all these volunteers. I talked to people that were in their late 50's and 60's, and they remember going door to door for LBJ. You know, "All the way with LBJ." You know, you think to yourself—"Boy, I wouldn't spend five minutes trying to talk to people about Linden B. Johnson, because of what I know about him now, but at the time when you're young and idealistic, being a participant in something bigger than yourself is real attractive. And I have a feeling it wasn't difficult at all motivating people to help with the Stephens Park thing. They can feel like, "Boy, I've really done my part to help the town." But to say that these environmental groups were people were catalytic or influential--they had nothing to do

with negotiating the deal. They had nothing to do with the structure of the deal. They had nothing to do with persuading the city to get motivated...that was all Darwin.

**Mike:** Well, I don't have any other questions. I think we've covered everything I wanted to talk about, unless there's anything else that...

**Van Matre:** I think what's interesting about this is the fact that a really popular leader can put a good idea like this over the top. Just from the force of his personality. You just don't realize the impact that a committed, idealistic—somebody who nobody can hang as having some ulterior motive, some financial incentive....where you're truly looking out for the public good. And I think if I were you, I would think about this. Currently, Darwin is engaged in trying to run the Pednet through the Audubon lands, and his son-in-law is employed by this PedNet Coalition. And Darwin's got a tarnished input on it because of that belief that his motives aren't completely pure. But on this park, nobody could tint anything other than the highest possible motives on it. And that is what it takes to win this kind of election. You have to have...you know, if Stephens Lake were...if Stephens College had been trying to put this through...it never would have happened. They wouldn't be the kind of thing...it was necessary for Stephens to be the bad guy and say, "You know, I don't care if you don't buy it. We're going to sell it to the next developer, and so..." it was a clear case of good vs. evil and long-term public good versus detriment. That's what motivates people. That what makes people get up off the couch and help and contribute and be enthusiastic about it. And so I think contrasting what is happening with this PedNet thing, which I do not think they'll wind up running

that trail through that Audubon land....And, the second thing that Darwin did that was “tarnished”—when his personality couldn’t carry the day, was when they wanted to annex a bunch of land around town. They were going to have an annexation election. Were you here when that happened?

**Mike:** I don’t remember what year that was. Were they just trying to clean up some boundaries?

**Van Matre:** I didn’t really pay attention, but The big property that they wanted to glum onto was the Phillips Land. 640 acres. At that point in time I represented the owners of that property. We were trying to play the city and the county against each other to see if we could get the right zoning, to see if we could get the right infrastructure. I talked to Darwin about it and said we’ll come into the City, we’ll bring all this land into the City as part of an annexation and you will have control of it, but we gotta have commercial, we gotta have a substantial part commercial. Darwin said, “I think we will just annex it, involuntary annexation.” And I said Darwin you’ll never do that. He said well we’ll see about that. So they developed this plan where they were going to annex all the way around, quite a few acres including the Phillips farm. Well we hired a PR firm and made the city look like they were trampling on people’s property rights and they were doing it just for greed and taxation and there was no particular public purpose for it. It got beat hands down in the city and hands down in the county. It was because everybody could see it was a power grab and peoples rights were being oppressed. So those two efforts by Darwin, one did fail and one probably will fail, and one succeeded and the major difference is that when he was working on Stephens Lake Park his motives were pure, it

was good vs. evil. It was a clear bright line and it made it possible to get the people moving in the right direction. It's the psychology that is so important.

**Mike:** One thing I forgot to mention, there were a lot of other things going on that were working against this deal for example the library renovation had just been approved.

Van Matre: That was the library board not the City.

Mike: Well the people perceived it as the City. That and the acquisition and development of the ARC had just passed and I am trying to think what else. There were several major...

Van Matre: There were several curmudgeons who thought the City was spending more money than they had and that they were getting out ahead of themselves, but it was like everybody's sitting here in their hum drum existence worried about how am I going to pay for this or that and then a tornado goes through Joplin and kills 143 people and everyone is like I don't care, I am going to go down and help those people. That is human nature. You want to be part of something that makes you feel good about yourself and you want to work towards a goal that is bigger than yourself. Where there are clear lines between good and evil. That is what everybody's looking for. That is a way to give life meaning. That's what happened with Stephens Lake Park. It wouldn't make any difference how many things were going on unless they were overwhelming and the City was on the verge of bankruptcy. But don't forget, they also asked the voters permission



by saying we'll buy this park if you pass this tax. If you don't pass this tax, we can't buy the park. So the real stake holders were being brought into the deal. On the City office building, on the annexation, on the parking garages nobody asked the voters a darn thing. That is what generates the resentment and the opposition. There are going to be people opposed no matter what, on the right side of the bell curve, but they got an audience when they can say they don't care what you think. They are doing it for their own self aggrandizement. And that resonates. So on this park deal they said it's your park. You can vote for it or not. That is why the whole thing came together. You had purity of motive. You had energetic leadership. You had voter buy in.

Mike: Thank you very much

VanMatre: You bet and unless you got any questions, you don't need to show me any transcript.

Mike: I will email it to you because my thesis advisor will want me to but you don't have to review it if you don't want to.

END OF TAPE