

News Release from: City of Salem

**CITY OF SALEM AND SALEM-KEIZER SCHOOL DISTRICT COMPLETE PURCHASE OF FORMER BATTLE CREEK GOLF COURSE**

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In back-to-back closings last week, the City of Salem and the Salem-Keizer School District 24J (SKSD) completed the purchase of the southern portion of the former Battle Creek Golf Course.

The City began exploring the possibilities of acquiring some of the closed Battle Creek Golf Course when it was offered for sale in 2008. Initially, the City expressed interest in the southern 38 acres of the property that includes the convergence of Powell Creek, Scotch Creek, and Wain Creek, into the southeast flowing Battle Creek. The area suffered significant flooding during the 1996 floods. Flooding was attributed to overflows from these creeks coupled with insufficient culverts capable of conveying stormwater down gradient of the course to the southeast. Other than stormwater improvements, the area was envisioned to be left in a natural state.

On August 4, 2008, Salem City Council held a work session regarding purchasing the property and possible uses for it. On August 25, 2008, Salem City Council approved a purchase agreement with the sellers, Terry Kelly and Mary Rentfro, to acquire 38.52 acres of the Battle Creek land. However, due to the unforeseen credit crisis, the purchase agreement was not executed, and the terms of the sale were renegotiated between the parties. City Council looked at purchase terms on December 15, 2008, and again on December 23, 2008.

Subsequent to the City's purchase, the property owners requested and were granted a rezone of their remaining property to the north from PA (Public Amusement) to RS (Residential Single Family) and RM-1 (Residential Multi-Family). The portion of the property fronting Commercial Street SE was already zoned CR (Commercial Retail) and was not a part of the rezoning process.

In spring 2009, City staff entered into discussions with the owners concerning the possibility of acquiring additional property to the north to address the City's need for a large urban park. Over the course of that same summer, the SKSD also expressed its interest to site an elementary school on approximately 10+ acres at the northwesterly corner of the property to be acquired. It was proposed that the City of Salem and the SKSD work together in acquiring a total of 68 acres, with both purchases combined, and concurrently selling 10 acres back to the SKSD.

The Salem City Council held a public hearing on April 26, 2010, to amend both the Parks Master Plan to recreate Battle Creek Golf Course as a Large Urban Park, and amend the Salem Transportation System Plan to create a new collector street between Madras Street NE and Commercial Street NE.

On June 28, 2010, Council authorized the purchase of the property and the concurrent reselling of 10.61 acres of its northern 29.60 acre purchase to the SKSD. The SKSD would also pay a twenty five percent share of the total cost for a new collector street that will service the new school site and the City's remaining property.

The City of Salem and SKSD's transactions were completed September 30, 2010, with the City having paid a combined total of \$5.5 million for 68 acres, with a credit back to the City of Salem for \$863,651 for the resell of 10.61 acres to the SKSD. Acquisition of this property affords the City's Public Works Department an opportunity to improve storm drainage infrastructure, and limit the potential for future flooding upstream of these creeks by increasing floodway capacity on site, as well as future development of a large urban park. The SKSD is also moving forward quickly with its development plans to construct a new elementary school on its recently acquired 10.61-acre site.

Throughout the process, the City and the SKSD worked closely together to make these transactions take place. "We are very excited about this site," said Salem-Keizer School District Superintendent Sandy Husk. "The location is great because our commitment to the voters is to provide relief for overcrowded schools in that area. This deal is part of our long-term cooperation and partnership with the City of Salem."

Husk said the new school will open in fall 2012. Funding comes from a bond measure approved by voters in 2008. The bond provided \$242 million for repair and renovation of existing schools throughout the district, three new elementary schools, and a new middle school.

The City is initiating a project to construct a new collector street between Madras Street SE and Commercial Street SE. The new street will provide access to the new school property and include two travel lanes, bike lanes, some on-street parking, and sidewalks. A bridge or culvert structure to span Waln Creek will also be required. Other improvements to be constructed as part of the project include sanitary sewer and water mains in the new collector street, widening and signal improvements for a new left-turn lane on Madras Street SE at Commercial Street SE, and widening of Commercial Street SE between Madras Street SE and Fairway Avenue SE to provide an additional southbound travel and bike lane. Construction is expected to begin in the second half of 2011 and continue through the summer of 2012.

The City commissioned a stormwater study by Parsons Brinckerhoff in May 2010 to characterize existing conditions within the Battle Creek watershed and inform future development of the golf course site. The modeling performed in the study will provide an updated estimate of existing flood conditions during storm events and ensure that "no-rise" flood elevation requirements are met with future development of the school, park, and privately owned areas of the site. A final report of the results of the stormwater study are expected in late October, with a public meeting to follow for sharing the results with interested area residents.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to engage the community," says Salem Public Works Director Peter Fernandez. "Moving forward involves sharing the results of the stormwater study with residents in November. Then in 2011, we are looking forward to a significant citizen involvement effort as part of creating a Master Plan for the new 50-acre park."