PARK AT ASYLUM LAKE BACKED

By P.N. TODD
Gazette Staff Writer

There appears to be strong support among state and local officials to use some land at Asylum Lake for a park.

That's the conclusion of Kalamazoo County Planning Director Bruce A. Watts following a meeting earlier this week of more than a dozen key officials on future planning of that area.

Watts said Dr. Clarence Schrier, who is soon to retire from the medical superintendent of Kalamazoo State Hospital, was "supporting strongly" setting aside some 100 acres on the lake for park and open space use.

According to Watts, Mark Zarbock, a lawyer for Dr. Schrier, said they feel the flat land south of the lake and north of Parkview Avenue is "ideal" for a new children's unit for the state hospital, and they gave high priority to that proposal.

Monday's meeting was set up at the urging of the County Planning Commission, some of whose members were angered to learn of plans for a new Michigan National Guard armory nearby in Oshtemo Township, when they'd never been consulted.

(Gov. William Milliken recently vetoed a bill which would have made the new armory possible, saying that the need hadn't been shown.)

Among others present at Monday's session in the Kalamazoo Public Library were:

Eric Berry, state Office of Intergovernmental Affairs; Dr. Myron Conter, Western Michigan University vice president for institutional services and William Kowalski, WMU campus planner; James Bath and Angus Howeth of the Michigan State University entomology department; Bob Ellis, aide to State Rep. Howard Wolpe.

Also Col. Arthur Phillips of the State Department of Military Affairs (Michigan National Guard) and other officers; Oshtemo Township Supervisor Kenneth Nedervelt; State Rep. Bela Kennedy of Bangor; William Vermeulen, Kalamazoo city parks superintendent; Don Kelley, Kalamazoo County parks director, and Kay Oppinger, chairwoman of the county parks commission; County Com. Jack Hunt; and a couple of citizens.

Several Kalamazoo city and Kalamazoo County planning commissioners (including Dr. Myron Ross, who moderated the session) were present. City and county planners met for lunch recently, prior to the session with state officials.

Watts said he believes state officials are "receptive" to local participation in deciding what to do with state lands in the Asylum Lake area, and the consensus was that the group should meet again before any such decisions are made.

Some of the hundreds of state-owned acres in that area are under Kalamazoo State Hospital control, others are administered by Western Michigan University.

Michigan State University is involved because some pesticide research is being conducted on an old orchard on state property, Watts said.

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