

Letter to the Editor
Thomas P. Royer
President/CEO
April 17, 2020

In response to last week's Letter to the Editor regarding the Beech Brook property sale, I feel the need once again to clarify several misleading statements.

In the 17 months prior to our entering a contract with the Axiom Group, no person or entity came forward with any type of proposal for a park or nature preserve.

At no time, before or since we entered into that contract, did the Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) contact us to negotiate or make an offer. I did contact them on April 6, 2020, simply to verify that they had not announced their interest in purchasing our property. They confirmed that they had not. While we did have a conversation, it is quite a stretch to imply that we are negotiating with them, that they have offered to purchase the land, that they have a plan to purchase the land, or that there will be any ongoing discussion about purchasing the land. That is not the case.

Another claim is that we do not allow visitors to our campus because I declined a request to have someone opposed to the rezoning bring in two other organizations to conduct an ecological analysis. This request was inappropriate on several levels. Again, I must reiterate that our property is already under contract. Imagine if you were selling your home and, while your home was under contract, a third party – not the buyer – asked to bring in another appraiser with the intent of undermining your sale. Second, extensive environmental studies of our land have already been completed as part of this process. Third, there is no one there to meet with visitors because our campus is closed due to COVID-19. Finally, I left my personal cell phone number with the person making the request and encouraged them to call me to discuss it. They did not return my call.

I understand the need for public discussion around this issue so that all concerned citizens can be heard. There have been and will be more opportunities for this at City Council meetings and public hearings, which is the appropriate forum for these discussions.

I am not sure why Mr. and Mrs. Naft have appointed themselves to represent the citizens of Pepper Pike, the Western Reserve Land Conservancy and a purported anonymous donor. The voters will have a chance to make their own choice about rezoning when the time comes, and they should be able to make their decisions based on facts and not misinformation.

Beech Brook is trying to do the right thing to sustain our mission. As I have said before, the time has come for us to move from a large property we no longer need, nor can we afford to maintain, so that we can continue our mission for children and families. I respectfully ask that the attacks and false claims against Beech Brook stop, and that further discussion focuses on accurate information and legitimate concerns surrounding the rezoning.