

News release



Everett Public Schools

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School district to give county first rights on forested property in Eastmont ***Neighbors hope for regional park and green space on school district property***

During its Nov. 16 board meeting Everett Public Schools directors authorized Superintendent Gary Cohn to draw up papers allowing Snohomish County *right of first refusal* on district property near Jefferson Elementary School.

Approximately eight acres of forested land is considered by many in the Eastmont neighborhood to be a prime location for a park or environmental classroom. Neighborhood representatives have expressed concerns that the district would someday sell the property to developers. Neighbors have expressed a desire for the district to develop the land into a park or to transfer the property to the county for use as a park.

"We have no current plans for the property," Mike Gunn, executive director of facilities and planning for the district, has said. "We are in the business of education, not in the business of parks. We have a responsibility to our taxpayers to manage their assets in a way that maximizes our ability to educate students. For those reasons, we cannot build park spaces or give away land. What we can do is demonstrate our history of and intention to remain good neighbors by giving the county the first right to buy the property at fair market rates from the district if we should ever decide to sell."

The district and the county will begin soon to draw up documents for such an agreement. Once complete, the documents will be reviewed by the board of directors before approval.

"We too value open space and forest as learning laboratories for students and neighborhoods," said Superintendent Cohn during the discussion. "We also value the relationship our district and Jefferson Elementary has enjoyed over the years with the residents of Eastmont. We consider this pending agreement with the county to future cement that relationship and end any worries residents might have that the district desires to turn the forest into a development. This arrangement is good for the district, good for the community, good for now and good for the future."

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