

BURDITT PRAIRIE CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

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PO Box 142883
Austin, TX 78714

Item # 103
and # 104

December 1, 2011

Austin City Council
Austin City Hall
301 West 2nd Street
Austin, TX 78702

RE: Burditt Prairie Cemetery Association statement concerning City of Austin property acquisition of 530 & 626 Bastrop Hwy.

Dear City Council Members:

The Burditt Prairie Cemetery Association wishes to express its concern regarding the pending deed transfer and associated rezoning (applicable case numbers: NPA-2010-0005.03 and C14-2010-0138) of 44 acres of donated real estate in the Montopolis neighborhood from private hands to City of Austin control. The case is currently scheduled for city council action at the December 8, 2011 meeting.

We are concerned that the City of Austin has not performed proper due diligence in conjunction with this real estate transaction. More specifically, we are concerned that portions of the land to be transferred to city control could contain burials contiguous to the Burditt Prairie Cemetery, a historic African-American cemetery registered with the state of Texas.

The Burditt Prairie Cemetery Association is responsible for the upkeep and management of this important burying ground. Our membership includes lineal descendants of the formerly enslaved and emancipated people buried there.

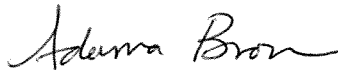
Portions of the land tracts to be transferred abut the edge of the cemetery's current eastern boundary. But this area, which is heavily vegetated, has never been properly surveyed by a qualified archaeologist *and the potential for the inadvertent discovery of additional burials is high*. To our chagrin, an archaeological survey of this important area was not conducted by the city.

The Burditt Prairie Cemetery Association does not object to the real estate transfer per se. The donation of so much property to the city is a generous gesture and we agree that eventual conversion of the land to parkland would enhance the quality of life of the neighborhood and the city. Not at the expense, however, of our sacred ancestors. No trail or park is more significant than the protection of this cemetery and the people buried there.

We urge the council to delay action on this real estate acquisition pending the conductance of a proper archaeological survey. Should the city decide to postpone action on this item pending the completion of a survey, our association is prepared to share important historical and other information with city officials or its representatives and to assist in any way we can.

We realize that the donating family wishes to transfer the real estate to city hands as soon as possible so as to avoid paying 2011 property taxes. While we sympathize, the costs of avoiding the issue and running into potential problems down the road outweigh these concerns.

Sincerely,



Adama Brown
President, Burditt Prairie Cemetery Association

cc: City of Austin Clerk