

Ballpark's fate discussed Monday

(KAIR)--The future of an Atchison ballpark was a key focus during a lengthy meeting of the Atchison City Commission Monday.

At the beginning of the session, community voices were heard by the Commission regarding the proposed sale of Walt Wilburn Memorial Ball Park.

They included Steve Busch, a resident of the Branchton area where Walt Wilburn Memorial Ball Park is located. "I just don't know why on earth we want to sell the park. I can't comprehend that, so you're going to have to help me," Busch told the Commission.

Following Bush's comments, David Kesinger, who both lives by the park and utilizes it as a softball player, told the Commission he continues to see strong use of the park, by both players and non-players alike, adding that community members are opposed to the City selling the park, and are willing to volunteer for upkeep and maintenance to keep it operating. "I wish there was a way that we could have a chance to let me come up with the volunteers again, see if I can do it. If I can, great, actually get these contractors to say, 'Yea, David, when can we do it?' And if I can do that, what I'm asking is, let me do it, because I know the usage of the fields will go way up, because a lot of people won't play in our league just because the fields are in the shape that they're in."

The issue was again addressed toward the end of Monday's meeting, when a sometimes heated discussion unfolded between Commissioner Charlie Perdue, members of City Staff, and Perdue's fellow Commissioners, including Mayor Shawn Rizza. "I think we've had a positive discussion. It wasn't until you needed to do your show, and turn it all negative," Rizza said to Perdue. "Well, he's campaigning," Vice-Mayor Allen Reavis added.

Ultimately, no decision was made, but Rizza thanked Kesinger and Busch, who remained through the full 2-hour-plus meeting, and said the conversation regarding the park's future will continue. "I think we just need to talk about it and figure out what that solution is," Rizza said.

The ball park was placed earlier in the City's land bank, with the City late last month announcing that proposals for purchase would be considered. The decision for the sale comes as part of the City's goal to downsize the number of parks.