

**SOUTH BEND BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 21, 2015**

The Board of Park Commissioners of the Park District of the City of South Bend, Indiana met on Monday, September 21, 2015 at the O'Brien Administration & Recreation Center, 321 E. Walter St., South Bend, Indiana for its regular meeting. Notice of the date, time and place of the meeting were duly given as required by law.

Park Board members present were as follows:

Ms. Amy Hill, President  
Mr. Mark Neal, Vice President  
Ms. Aimee Buccellato

Park Board members absent were as follows:

Staff members present: Phil St. Clair, Director of Parks; Ron O'Connor, Director of Financial Services; Susan O'Connor, Deputy Director of Parks; Randy Nowacki, Director of Golf Operations; John Martinez, Interim Maintenance Superintendent; Matt Moyer, Special Project Coordinator; Paula Garis, Special Events Supervisor; Michael Schmidt, Park Board Attorney

**I. The meeting was called to order by Board President Amy Hill at 4:00 p.m. with a special welcome to students to St Mary's College.**

**II. The first order of business was the interviewing of interested citizens.**

1. Don McKempself representing RADD (Running Against Drunk Driving) requested approval to host a 5K run at the East Race River Walk on October 17, 2015. He was advised to consult Paula Garis and provide the proper insurance and paperwork.
2. Dan with Transformation Ministries looking to host an event at Keller Park on October 10, 2015 and was advised to work with Paula to coordinate the details.
3. Ted Beatty representing the South Bend Skullers approached the Park Board to announce he would be coming back in October to request the occupation of former Notre Dame Boathouse located in Ewing Park.

**III. Report By Organizations**

1. Potawatomi Zoological Society- Not available
2. South Bend Cubs – Not available
3. South Bend Botanical Society- Not available

**IV. The next order of business was unfinished business.**

Steve Doninger, Owner/President, of Edge Adventures returned to finalize a Ground Lease agreement providing an Aerial Park located at Rum Village. The ground lease establishes the framework for Edge Adventures a five year lease beginning January 2016 through December 2021 to construct an aerial park with the intent to open spring 2016. The request for a favorable motion from the Park Board in September was predicated by the need to

establish and design the exact location for future construction of the course. Michael Schmidt made a recommendation for a favorable approval by the board based upon receiving the final exhibit on or before December 31, 2015 outlining the exact location and access areas for construction. Upon agreement the contract for the Ground Lease was signed by all parties.

Mr. Neal made a motion to approve contingent upon receiving the final exhibit.  
Ms. Buccellato seconded the motion and it was approved.

**V. The next order of business was new business.**

1. Request for Use of Parks- Paula Garis: Dr. Fred Ferlic, current member of the Common Council representing the fourth district, came before the board to present an “Adopt-A-Park” concept for the eight parks located within his district. Dr. Ferlic presented his “Adopt-A-Park” alternative as a mutually beneficial pilot program for both, the neighboring residents and the park maintenance division. All present were in favor of such a program, however felt a need to create a document designed exclusively for guiding these public/private ventures with the park department. Dr Ferlic committed to draft a proposal and return with the intent for a motion to approve.
2. Request to Approve Arborist Licenses – No Applications
3. Elbel For Everyone – Represented by a group of approximately 15 to 20 individuals with a special interest in preserving the greenspace at Elbel Park/Elbel Golf Course as a Nature Preserve. Introducing Elbel For Everyone was Ricky Klee and Jennifer Betz, followed by the brief interest and support of the remaining group. Attached are two documents provided by Elbel for Everyone which will provide details from their perspective as concerned residents; The Community We Could Become Summary and The Community We Could Become White Paper.

**VI. Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Hill made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular Board meeting held on September 21, 2015 as mailed. The motion was seconded by Ms. Buccellato and approved.

**VII. Approval of Maintenance Vouchers**

A motion was made by Mr. Neal to approve maintenance vouchers for September 2015 totaling \$775,430.03.

It was seconded by Ms. Buccellato. There being no further discussion, the motion was passed.

**VIII. Business by Director St. Clair**

1. Update on the park bond – net proceeds available are approximately \$5M
- 2 Update on plans for a new ice rink using TIF funding approximately \$1.2M according to preliminary design plans.

**IX. Comments by the Deputy Director**

- 1 Update on ISC (softball) tournament – seen around 14,000 spectators with an economic impact estimated to the community of around \$850,000

2 Update on summer programs with attendance and revenue handouts

**X. Comments by the Director of Golf Operations**

- 1 Update on seasonal golf rate discounts beginning September 1
- 2 Update on Cross Country meet and sectional run at city golf course
- 3 Update on aerification of greens at Elbel and Erskine
- 4 Update board on break in at Studebaker Gold Course Pro Shop

**XI. Comments by Maintenance Superintendent**

- 1 Update on ISC (softball tournament) went well for maintenance
- 2 Discussed possible wage increase for seasonal help next year to attract good help
- 3 Park Bond improvements have started with full court basketball pad at Kennedy Park
- 4 Will be working with specifications for the Kelly Park Pavilion
- 5 Working with organization for pre-approved vendor list (NJPA) to see if suitable for future use
- 6 Experimenting with the use of LED lighting at Sample riverwalk and seen a tremendous difference in the brightness of coverage area
- 7 Conducted in house cleanup of maintenance garage in anticipation of the Mayor's visit

**XII. Comments by the Director of Marketing**

- 1 Matt Moyer discussed the completion of the Fall/Winter activity guide

**XIII. There being no more business to come before the Board the meeting adjourned at 5:59 p.m. by President Hill**

The next regular meeting will be held November 16<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m. in the Boardroom of the O'Brien Administration Center.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ron O'Connor

## ***The Community We Could Become: Elbel Park as a Nature Preserve***

### ***Executive Summary (Please see White Paper for Full Analysis, Details, and Sources)***

Elbel Park, established in 1961, is South Bend's largest city park, and contains the area's biggest body of water, Mud Lake, as well as rolling hills, forests, and wetlands. The park currently supports golf, hiking, snow-shoeing, bird-watching, running, sledding, and cross-country skiing. Elbel was once a candidate for a state park, owing to its beautiful views, importance for migrating wildlife, and unique ecology. In many ways, Elbel's fate is tied to important questions that all of us must answer, about the kind of community we want to become.

The city proposes to sell Elbel to private ownership, terminating public access to the park, as it recently did with Blackthorn Golf Course. This sale is prompted by several factors: Golf Operations at Elbel, Erskine, and Studebaker registered \$488,861 in losses between 2010-13, projected golf capital improvement costs in the next four years are forecast at over a million dollars, participation in golf has declined rapidly in the last five years, and general park budget problems mean the sale of public lands could help mitigate projected shortfalls.

This proposal, which would likely make Elbel either a privately operated golf course, or a residential development, creates tremendous problems for our community. The alienation of Blackthorn, Elbel, and Erskine would mean the total loss of 613 acres of public land in two years, reducing South Bend Park Department land to just 917 acres in total. This means South Bend would hold fewer park acres per 1,000 residents (9.07) than the median U.S. city of its density and type (14.8), as well as far fewer park acres than many prominent Midwestern cities such as Indianapolis, Akron, Madison, St. Louis, and Cincinnati, to name a few. As parks have proven benefits for economic development, community health, and property tax assessments, South Bend's back of the pack status would drastically diminish its competitiveness and quality as a city. Because Elbel Park is just outside city limits, development of the land would mean no new tax revenue for South Bend. It is unlikely that any sale would recover close to the investment South Bend citizens placed in Elbel (4.1 million in today's dollars), resulting in a large loss of citizen equity. Financially, the sale of Elbel seems sensible in only the most narrow and short-term of perspectives.

Taking seriously Elbel's unique and irreplaceable beauty and value, as well as the financial challenges that face the city and the Parks Department, we propose a way forward that protects public access to Elbel in perpetuity, eliminates ongoing revenue shortfalls from Golf Operations and projected

capital improvements, achieves many strategic goals outlined in the South Bend Parks Master Plan, and contributes to education and economic development in our community.

Elbel's special combination of lake, wetland, hills, forest, and meadows, and decades of support of hikers, bird-watchers, nature lovers, and winter sports, indicate its vital place in our community. No other city park can match its size, beauty, diversity of habitats, or potential. Our proposal envisions a partnership with a land trust with a proven record of environmental protection and ecological education. Partnership with a land trust would, at no cost to taxpayers, protect the many of the recreational activities Elbel currently sustains, develop non-profit capacity in our community to educate and involve children in the restoration and importance of natural areas, provide a purchase price to ameliorate projected shortfalls elsewhere in the Parks Department budget, and restore Elbel as a healthier and more vital nature preserve. A recommended partner would be Shirley Heinze Land Trust. Shirley Heinze has indicated its interest in exploring such a partnership, and has a strong record of successful collaboration with governments, non-profits, and private donors in providing natural preserves to the public, and offers innovative ecological education to thousands of children each year. Such a collaboration would assist the city in reaching many goals stated in the Parks Master Plan, including *"To Maintain, Utilize, and Preserve the Resources Entrusted to Us For the Public Good"*, *"To Strengthen the Ethic of Environmental Stewardship"*, to *"Promote Health and Wellness"*, and to *"Forge Community Partnerships"*.

In our city's 150<sup>th</sup> year, the proposed sale of Elbel represents is a true watershed moment, in all senses of the phrase. Our city could grow in new and exciting ways. We could protect and restore one of the most beautiful areas of our community, to pass along to future generations the loveliness and integrity of our natural world. We could provide our residents in perpetuity with a rich and expansive natural area in which to cherish family and friendship, to become healthier, to slow down and explore the land around us. We could do our part to improve the finances of South Bend Parks, to maintain its services for all South Bend citizens. We could offer our children the natural education and enjoyment that they want and need. And we could establish our parks as the true cornerstone in our community's economic foundation. In many ways, a restored and protected Elbel Park represents the best that our community could become.

## ***The Community We Could Become: Elbel Park as a Nature Preserve***

This white paper provides context and information for those interested in the future of Elbel Park. At 313 acres, Elbel is South Bend's biggest park; the next largest park in the South Bend system, Rum Village, is half the size of Elbel. Elbel Park features Mud Lake, the South Bend area's largest body of water, as well as forests, wetlands, and meadows. Because of its natural beauty, decades ago Elbel was considered as an alternate candidate for a state park. More than a golf course, Elbel supports hiking, running, sledding, snowshoeing, bird watching, and cross country skiing by South Bend residents.

Currently, the city is in the process of preparing Elbel for possible sale. This white paper argues that the following actions will best serve the South Bend community:

- 1) To preserve public access to Elbel Park in perpetuity with a land trust partnership
- 2) To achieve goals of the *Five Year South Bend Parks Master Plan*
- 3) To provide funding to address park budget shortfalls and to end losses from golf operations
- 4) To connect children to our unique local ecology
- 5) To enhance the economic development of our region with a premier nature preserve

### To preserve public access to Elbel Park in perpetuity with a land trust partnership

City communities receive vitality from many sources, including schools, neighborhoods, urban centers, businesses, non-profits, and parks. With the latter, South Bend is in danger of falling far behind both national standards and Midwestern peer cities regarding access to park land. According to figures from The Trust for Public Land, American 'low-density' cities, a category of cities structured like South Bend, have a median 14.8 acres of public park land per 1,000 residents. (The Trust for Public Land, *2015 City Parks Facts Report: Parklands, Density Appendix*, accessible at <http://www.tpl.org/2015-city-park-facts>) If Blackthorn (180 acres), Erskine (120 acres), and Elbel (313 acres) have public access eliminated by sale to private, for-profit owners, as has been proposed, South Bend's 101,168 residents (per 2010 Census) would see the 1530 acres of park land held in their name in 2014 reduced to 917 acres by 2016, resulting in 9.05 acres per 1,000 residents.

Using a different metric, considering the simple number of residents per park acre in Midwestern cities, St. Louis, MO, has 86 residents per park acre, Indianapolis, IN, 72, Madison, WI, 44, Cincinnati, OH, 39, and Akron, OH, has 24 residents per park acre. (Compiled from statistics of The Trust for Public Land, *2015 City Parks Facts Report*, accessible at <http://www.tpl.org/2015-city-park-facts> pp. 1-8). If Blackthorn, Elbel, and Erskine are all alienated from public access by sale, in two years South Bend would nearly double its number of residents per park acre, moving from 66 residents per park acre to 110.

Sale of Elbel to a private developer or golf-course operator would create in South Bend a deficiency of natural areas, relative to cities regionally and nationally. A path forward is needed

that preserves public access to Elbel's natural beauty and ecologically important lands and waters, while addressing the significant problems that have prompted the potential sale of the city's golf courses. Indeed, this problem is structural, indicating a lack of development in support of our local ecology by governmental organizations and by non-profits.

One finds few resources for environmental stewardship and education in our area. Beyond the governmental level, South Bend has a relatively inactive non-profit sector to sustain freely accessible parks and natural preserves. Out of 92 Indiana counties, St. Joseph County is one of just three without an operating land trust for nature conservation. The very successful "Give Local St. Joseph County" fundraiser of the Community Foundation raised over 6.7 million dollars for fifty-two non-profits in our area on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015, but less than 1% went to the only local non-profit, The St. Joseph County Parks Foundation, with nature conservation as a focus. The Nature Conservancy, Indiana's largest non-profit conservation organization, does not have a project site within 40 miles of South Bend. And no South Bend entity has yet made a successful application for the 2016 Bicentennial Nature Trust funds, a \$30 million dollar public-private partnership to acquire new lands for conservation.

In view of this complex situation, a partnership with a non-profit land trust with experience in the protection and restoration of natural areas may be wise. Such a partnership could contractually establish perpetual public access to the land, provide a purchase price to defray projected budget shortfalls in the South Bend Parks' near future, end the financial losses borne by taxpayers from Elbel's golf operations, and develop non-profit organizational capacity in the local area to acquire and maintain new preserves and parks. This partnership could also enable South Bend Parks to achieve many of the stated goals in its Master Plan, including the

development of environmental education for school children, the promotion of health and wellness, and the preservation of the assets entrusted to the city.

A candidate for such a partnership could be the Shirley Heinze Land Trust (Shirley Heinze), which has decades of experience in acquiring, restoring, and preserving natural areas in three northern Indiana counties: LaPorte, Porter, and Lake. Please see the attachment at the end of this white paper for more information on this possible partner.

### **To achieve goals of the *Five Year South Bend Parks Master Plan***

Recently the South Bend Parks Department developed and published a comprehensive vision for the future of South Bend parks, called the *Five Year South Bend Parks Master Plan* (SBPMP). This plan describes the goals of the Parks Department, its financial reality, and the perspectives of national experts and local citizens regarding the best paths forward in the coming years. Among the goals articulated in this plan are “*To Maintain, Utilize, and Preserve the Resources Entrusted to Us For the Public Good*”, “*To Strengthen the Ethic of Environmental Stewardship*”, to “*Promote Health and Wellness*”, and to “*Forge Community Partnerships*”. (SBPMP, p. 118) The value of the proposed partnership with a land trust is best understood in reference to these goals.

Elbel is a **unique and special public resource** with a history of significant investment by South Bend citizens. Elbel Park is named for Richard Elbel, a South Bend Parks Board member from 1910-1937. The park was purchased and developed at the cost of \$550,000 from 1961-1965, an outlay equivalent to \$4.1 million dollars today. Elbel Park is South Bend’s biggest city

park, with 313 acres that host the South Bend area's largest body of water, Mud Lake, and a beautiful landscape of wetlands, mature hardwood forests, and rolling hills. Simply put, there is no other park in the South Bend park system like it. It is highly unlikely that the South Bend Parks Department, owing to limited financial capacity and heavy development in the areas surrounding South Bend, could in the future purchase a park like Elbel to serve the public good.

Because of its unique ecological identity, size, and beauty, Elbel offers a special opportunity to strengthen the **ethic of environmental stewardship** in South Bend. No other city park has the views, the space, the habitats, and proximity to South Bend schools and organizations as Elbel. Land trusts often partner with local schools to provide environmental education. Such a partnership could provide South Bend children, parents, and teachers access to Elbel's wetlands, forests, and many species, which specially characterize our local environment. Though Elbel already hosts deer, red tailed hawks, Great Blue Herons and migrating Sandhill Cranes, the many-year project to restore Elbel's landscape, and to eliminate the pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, and non-native species currently in use by the golf course, would undoubtedly and dramatically increase the diversity of flora and fauna at the park, providing an unparalleled opportunity for South Bend youth to see and learn firsthand the difference environmental science can make when applied to the protection and restoration of natural areas.

A protected and restored Elbel would also provide great opportunities for the **health and wellness** of the South Bend community. Land trusts serve to provide the public access to natural areas for many purposes. For example, Shirley Heinze's thousands of acres of land held in trust in Northern Indiana for the public offer hiking, trail running, bird watching, cross

country skiing, dog walking, photography, nature study, and many other forms of recreation. During limited times and conditions, fishing and hunting are possible in some areas. These activities, and the availability of beautiful, open natural spaces, yield many of benefits the Master Plan describes as unique to great parks: better physical and psychological health, stronger neighborhoods and communities, and better air and water quality. (SBPMP, 108)

An alliance with a land trust to protect, restore, and preserve Elbel would **forge a community partnership** that would obviously benefit citizens, the South Bend Parks Department, and our local environment. As the Master Plan notes, “Strategic partnerships with both the public and private sector are essential to maximize the potential of the facilities and programs offered to the community.” (SBPMP, 122) Given the lack of organization and development in St. Joseph County’s non-profit sector regarding natural preservation noted above, this proposed partnership with a land trust promises to address an obvious need in our community now, with the potential to grow in beneficial ways in the future.

**To provide funding to address park budget shortfalls and end losses from golf operations**

In part, this need for partnership originates from the financially tenuous future of South Bend Parks: “The SBPRD is doing the most it can to maintain and improve existing parks. However, the Department’s current and projected budget is not sufficient to maintain and improve current parks and facilities to the level needed to meet community needs.” (SBPMP, 122) Unlike proposals to continue the public provision of golf at Elbel, or to eliminate public

access to Elbel entirely via sale to a private developer or golf course operator, the proposal to partner with a land trust would alone retain public access to Elbel, provide funds to address the Parks Department's projected budget shortfall, and end the financial losses charged to taxpayers by Golf Operations at the park.

In certain cases, the sale of a public park to a private, for-profit entity could result in greater tax revenue for the municipality, thus providing more money for parks. It is important to note that this is not the case with Elbel, as the park is sited just outside South Bend's city limits. Private development of Elbel would not result in direct tax payments to South Bend.

The South Bend Parks Master Plan uses "The Pyramid Methodology", a schema in use by park agencies across the country, to categorize recreation types according to purpose and budget goals. In this schema Golf is categorized as a "Level 4" activity that provides "Considerable Individual Benefit". It describes this class of activity as ideally requiring "No Subsidy" and a "Full Recovery" of all costs associated with its provision to the public, on account of its primarily individual benefit. (SBPMP, p.107, Table 18) However, Golf Operations of the City of South Bend have lost a considerable amount of money in recent years. The *South Bend Tribune* reported losses of \$488,861 between 2010 and 2013 at the city courses of Elbel, Erskine, and Studebaker. In this period, only Studebaker enjoyed a profitable year, earning \$2,000 in 2011. ("Golfers Concerned" *South Bend Tribune*, 8/19/15) In addition to ongoing yearly losses, the Master Plan describes capital expenses of several million dollars as necessary to simply maintain golf facilities in South Bend between 2014 to 2019. (SBPMP, 163-8)

According to *The Economist*, declining course revenue and golf course closures are symptoms of an overall decline in interest and participation in the sport: in 2006, 30 million

Americans played golf; by 2013, this number had dropped to 25 million. 2013 represented the 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of net golf course closures nationally. ("Why Golf is in Decline in America" *The Economist*, 4/2/15) Locally, golf club owners speculate that South Bend will require a reduction in courses to shore up the South Bend golf market. As Tim Firestone, an owner of Blackthorn Golf Course, stated to the *South Bend Tribune*, "We have too many golf courses with the number of population that we have...we either need population growth or for courses to go away." ("Golf is On" *South Bend Tribune*, 5/24/15)

Unlike golf, which requires substantial individual investments to purchase golf clubs, balls, bags, greens fees, and other paraphernalia, and which is not accessible by certain age groups, many of the activities supported by a restored and preserved Elbel Park would be accessible by all South Bend citizens, regardless of income level or age. The proposed conversion of Elbel to a nature preserve would provide in perpetuity many activities the Master Plan describes as foundational, Level I and Level II benefits: **Open Space and Trails, Open Recreation, After School Programs**. Owing to their broad appeal and community building power, these benefits are associated with a budget goal of "Full Subsidy" or "Majority Subsidy" from parks' budgets. (SBPMP, 107, Table 18) Yet the plan to preserve Elbel as a non-profit nature trust would not require ongoing annual outlays or regular capital investments from the South Bend Parks Department, thus providing tremendous benefits to the community with no cost to taxpayers.

### **To connect children to our unique local ecology**

Before it was known as the Crossroads of America for its many highways, Indiana was an ecological crossroads, with the most important natural byways located in Northern Indiana. Here eastern hardwood forests met western prairie lands, while the dunes and waters of Lake Michigan came near the Great Kankakee Marsh of Indiana's northwest, one of the largest freshwater wetlands in the world. South Bend was settled by European immigrants as the shortest land bridge across the Continental Divide between the Great Lakes and Mississippi waterways, represented by the St. Joseph and Kankakee Rivers, respectively, both of which flow through South Bend.

Today most South Bend citizens are unaware that the city has two rivers, that a million acre paradise that hosted millions of migrating birds once grew out of the waters of its West Side, that several globally rare habitats exist in and around the city's limits. Sheer diversity is the special characteristic of our local ecology, yet this diversity has very few places locally in which it can be seen, studied, and loved.

As citizens of South Bend in its 150<sup>th</sup> year, we owe the pioneers of our past and the residents of our future the protection of the natural beauty that we have received. We can expect our children to love and cherish a land that they know. Protecting and making accessible the wild diversity of our land is of paramount importance to the education of our children, together with provision of nearby parks in which to explore, study, contemplate, and enjoy nature.

### **To enhance the economic development of our region with a premier natural preserve**

The South Bend Parks Master Plan details the many economic benefits that accrue to a community which invests in nature and parks. Given the extensive treatment of the relationship of parks to the local economy in the SBPMP, only a summary will be given here. Parks and open spaces are associated with higher commercial and residential property values and thus higher tax revenues, increased tourism, lower health care costs, lower crime rates, improved air and water quality, better erosion and storm water control, and a higher perceived quality of life. (SBPMP, 107-10) Such benefits save cities and their taxpayers money, create new value for neighborhoods and commercial areas, and offer priceless contributions to the happiness and satisfaction of citizens. With the relationship between parkland and economic development in mind, it becomes clear that a comprehensive plan to preserve and protect South Bend parks and natural areas is needed to realize our full economic potential as a city.

### **Conclusion**

In our 150<sup>th</sup> year, South Bend has a unique opportunity to reflect on its past and its future. A basic question is this: What kind of community could we become?

The proposed sale of Elbel represents is a true watershed moment, in all senses of the phrase. Our city could grow in new and exciting ways. We could protect and restore one of the most beautiful areas of our community, to pass along to future generations the loveliness and integrity of our natural world. We could provide our residents in perpetuity with a rich and expansive natural area in which to cherish family and friendship, to become healthier, to slow down and explore the land around us. We could do our part to improve the finances of South

Bend Parks, to maintain its services for all South Bend citizens. We could offer our children the natural education and enjoyment that they want and need. And we could establish our parks as the true cornerstone in our community's economic foundation. Considering education, the economy, and our community's quality of life, a restored and protected Elbel Park represents the best that our community could become.

*Respectfully submitted to the South Bend Parks Board, local leaders, and all South*

*Bend residents by the members of Elbel for Everyone*

#### **SHIRLEY HEINZE LAND TRUST (SHLT) ATTACHMENT**

Shirley Heinze is a non-profit land trust, and makes permanently accessible to the public sixteen distinctive nature trusts, ranging from prairies and wetlands to dunes and forests. One of the largest providers of site-based ecological education to schools in the Chicagoland area, Shirley Heinze last year served nearly 3,700 children from 139 different classes via a curriculum developed with the Chicago Field Museum and the Dunes Learning Center. Shirley Heinze also offers its educational services to many other organizations, including Scout troops, Boys and Girls Clubs, daycares and environmental clubs. The Board of Shirley Heinze has recently approved a plan to offer its services in Saint Joseph County. In a March 2015 site visit, members of Shirley Heinze's staff and board studied the Elbel Park site, and described this large, beautiful, and ecologically valuable park as a truly rare and important conservation

opportunity. They have indicated their openness to further discussions involving the long-term protection of Elbel as a nature park accessible to all.

This year provides a unique opportunity to source and leverage funds for natural preserves. There is the possibility of applying for grants and soliciting donations from sources with ecological preservation and education as an identified priority, such as the Indiana Heritage Trust, the Community Foundation of Saint Joseph County, the Pokagon Fund, settlement funds from the Enbridge Pipeline, the Indiana Bicentennial Nature Trust, and local donors. Shirley Heinze has a strong record both of development activity and use of governmental and non-profit grants to support its mission. Please see their website, <http://www.heinzetrust.org/>, or an available brochure for more information on Shirley Heinze.