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To: Park Commission <pacommission@cityofmadison.com>
Subject: Agenda Item 88148

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August 13, 2025

Board of Park Commissioners

Subject: Merrill Springs Park - View Preservation Easement

I have lived adjacent to Merrill Springs Park since August 2014. As such, I am aware of much of the history of the Margetis/Harrison View Easement. In addition, I am aware of the issues that the lack of maintenance under view easement has caused, and how that has unfortunately allowed invasive and nonnative species to take over much of the slope and spread to adjacent properties. Consequently, I wholly support the City and the Harrisons clarifying the View Easement.

The proposed Amendments to the View Easement both respect and clarify the property ownership rights of the easement holders, while at the same time allows this area of Merrill Springs Park to be enhanced for all citizens of the City of Madison to enjoy this lakeside treasure. The comments of the Friends of Merrill Springs Park cherry pick certain aspects of the view easement they are unhappy with, while ignoring others that cannot be remedied due no fault of the Harrisons or what have been caused by "acts of god" (i.e. trees die due to age, disease, storms, the cabin is crushed by a fallen tree, etc.). In addition, it is no surprise to anyone - including the Friends of Merrill Springs Park - that the reason Merrill Springs Park was enlarged by two-thirds was because of the Margetis sale of their property to the City which had the View Easement as part of the transaction.

From the time I moved into my home through 2019, the vegetation of the view easement was, on average, maintained at about height of the wooden rail fence, which is about 4' high. It wasn't until the sale of the Margetis's property in January 2020, coupled with the extenuating circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, that the area became unmaintained for a couple of years. This lack of temporary maintenance is what caused the dispute over the maintenance of the view easement, as well as lead to invasive and nonnative species overwhelming this area of the park.

The Amended View Easement will eliminate further unnecessary controversy to a small, yet beautiful, neighborhood Park, one that all Madisonians should be able to enjoy - peacefully. As such, I support the City signing the Amended View Easement for Merrill Springs Park. This should hopefully put an end to this years' long controversy.

Sincerely,

Leslie K. Herje

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Madison, WI