

Taxes Force County To Amend Hansville Land Purchase

By Derek Sheppard
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HANSVILLE

An unexpected tax obligation has forced Kitsap County to downsize a land purchase in Hansville, but it's not all bad news.

A planned purchase of 112 acres in Hansville to add to the Hansville Greenway and Wildlife Corridor has been shrunk by 21 acres, but an additional 80 feet of space has been added to some trail easements.

The deal came earlier this week after the county was informed that it owed back taxes on the land, which it had agreed to purchase from Olympic Property Group for about \$1.1 million. Half of the purchase was funded with a grant. Olympic Property Group donated 2.5 miles of trail easements outside of the purchased land, which will allow trails to connect Puget Sound to Hood Canal.

"We learned shortly after (the approval of the sale) that the county was required by the Washington state Department of Revenue to pay taxes on that transaction," said Rick Fackler, a parks planner working under contract for the county.

Previously, when counties purchased land to use for conservation purposes, the department had exempted the government bodies from paying property taxes on the lands. A reinterpretation of the law has changed that.

The back taxes totaled \$72,000, "and that put us over budget," Fackler said.

The purchase and sale agreement contained several provisions to amend the sale if needed.

In response, the county will cut out 21 acres from the western portion of the conservation lands. Land has to be taken out in at least 20 acre chunks to prove viable for development in the future because of the zoning, Fackler said.

That reduction freed up money in the budget, so the county purchased an additional 80 feet along the donated trail easements — to make 100-foot corridors — that further isolate the trails from nearby development, allow a more meandering path and help the trail avoid obstacles like slopes and wetlands.

Trails connecting Hood Canal with Puget Sound could be complete by the summer.

On The Web: Hansville Greenway and Wildlife Corridor,
http://hansville.org/Greenway/hansville_greenway.htm



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