

# Agreements are signed with Hollow landowners

The help of State Senator Harry Meshel and donations from Edward J. DeBartolo have made possible purchase agreements signed by 7 Smokey Hollow landowners in the sale of their property to YSU for a \$5.5 million parking deck.

YSU president, Dr. John J. Coffelt made the announcement Tuesday morning in a press conference, which included Sen. Meshel; Carmen Policy, DeBartolo's lawyer; and 1st ward Councilman Richard Hughey.

The Smokey Hollow property, located between Wick Ave. and Walnut Street, has been an area of controversy since spring when YSU tried to purchase the land for the new deck. The 7 property owners who owned 8 parcels of land refused to sell because they felt the appraised value of their land was not sufficient enough for them to relocate into replacement homes.

Coffelt said the University "is limited to the appraised value approved by the Bureau of Real Estate: Ohio Department of Administrative Services, in Columbus."

Therefore, by law, YSU was now allowed to offer more

money and the owners felt the appraisals were too low for them to sell their land.

Meshel stepped in here, and in a second appraisal, helped to obtain higher values on the property. He was lauded by Coffelt at the conference.

The land values at the second appraisal ranged from \$4,700 to \$12,000. Meshel said each person would be receiving about \$2,000 more than the first appraisal.

In addition to the appraised value the residents are receiving, DeBartolo donated approximately \$30,000 to be divided among the 7 landowners.

Coffelt said, "On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to express publicly its appreciation to Mr. DeBartolo for his interests and generosity."

DeBartolo was brought up in the Smokey Hollow area and learned of the problem through his son, Edward J. DeBartolo, Jr., who is a trustee of the University. It is through this interest that DeBartolo contributed funds to be divided among the property owners, which will be a supplement to the money paid on the appraisal of the land.

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# Smokey Hollow

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Several months ago, when the owners refused to sell, YSU's Board of Trustees reluctantly directed the administration to acquire the land by eminent domain, Coffelt reported. Eminent domain is using the right of government to obtain private property for public use.

Coffelt stressed that "the Board's decision was reluctantly made as a 'last resort.'"

Last May, at city council's urging the University agreed to suspend eminent domain proceedings until other alternatives could be reviewed "which might assure more equitable treatment of the property owner and occupants." Coffelt said.

"Today we are pleased to

announce that purchase agreements have been signed with property owners, with final purchase subject to approval of the state Controlling Board later this month. Upon approval of the Controlling Board, the University's legal counsel will be directed to withdraw eminent domain actions." Coffelt announced on Tuesday.

With the agreements signed, the owners may remain in their homes until January or until it is necessary to gain access to the parking deck site. Coffelt said both the University and city will help find replacement homes for the residents.

The new parking facility will include a parking garage and a pedestrian bridge over Wick Avenue.