

Leila Arboretum to get the horse

Commissioners also discuss tax break

Barrett Newkirk • *The Enquirer* • October 6, 2010

The bronze horse sculpture that stood in downtown Battle Creek for 24 years will reappear in the Leila Arboretum after city commissioners unanimously approved the move at Tuesday's meeting.

David Gauthier stood up and asked commissioners why the 1,500-pound statue wasn't being sold for scrap to raise much-needed funds for the city.

City Manager Ken Tsuchiyama noted that it costs the city very little money to maintain the statue and that funding for the relocation was coming from grant money associated with city's downtown redevelopment plan.

Vice Mayor Chris Simmons said the sculpture has some artistic value, too, even if it didn't exactly suit his tastes.

"This is a public sculpture," Simmons said. "It belongs to the citizens of Battle Creek."

Commissioners also approved paying the Leila Arboretum Society \$50,000 for programs in the park. The funding was initially approved during the city budget process earlier this year.

The horse sculpture was donated to the city in 1986 and until Sept. 23 stood in a pedestrian plaza along Michigan Avenue.

That plaza is being rebuilt with an access driveway going through the horse's former post.

Much of the two-hour meeting focused on a tax abatement request for a funeral home planned for 375 W. Dickman Road.

The resolution would save the property owner an estimated \$202,000 over 12 years. Some commissioners said they were concerned about automatically granting the abatement for the 12-year maximum and possibly giving the funeral home an unfair advantage over existing businesses.

The tax break passed 6-3, but commissioners agreed to look closely at their policies for granting

tax breaks.

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