

**From:** City of Westwood, Kansas info-westwoodks.org@shared1.ccsend.com  
**Subject:** Message from the Mayor  
**Date:** April 16, 2025 at 5:56 PM  
**To:** juliana@johnsoncountypost.com



## Message from the Mayor Results of April 2025 Mail-in Ballot Election

Friends and Neighbors,

Following the April 1, 2025, mail-in ballot election, I know that our residents have questions about what happened, and what could happen now. Since that time, there have been a few moving parts, such that it was not practical until now to provide a comprehensive update to our residents. Today, I would like to take this opportunity to share the lay of the land—the things that we know, at this time. I will try to share this information in as straight-forward a manner as possible.

### **April 2025 Election Results.**

For the mail-in ballot election, 841 ballots were cast. That is 58.73% of Westwood's registered voters. Just for comparison, Lenexa's sales tax mail-in ballot vote had a voter turnout of only 24.48% and the Gardner-Edgerton School District bond mail-in ballot had a voter turnout of only 19.71%. The City of Westwood should be very proud of its engagement and the numbers in which our residents exercised their right to vote.

The Lenexa and Gardner-Edgerton questions were both approved by the electorate. In Westwood, on the question of "whether the Joe D. Dennis Park shall be sold, traded, or exchanged", the final results were:

398 votes in favor (47.44%)  
441 votes against (52.56%)

As I have stated many times, both from the dais at City Council meetings and in the City's written communications, the City respects the process and the City respects the ultimate decision made by our Westwood community.

## What Happens Now?

In our City FAQ, one of the questions we addressed was, “What happens if the ballot measure fails?” The following is the FAQ response:

If the ballot measure fails, then the City would retain Joe D. Dennis Park and it would remain in place. Neither the Karbank development nor the new park would be built. The City would also continue to hold the vacant former Westwood Christian Church site (which is not officially part of Dennis Park) and approximately \$275,000 in debt on that property.

There are not any current plans or funds budgeted for renovation or expansion of Dennis Park or the former church property. Dennis Park would remain as it currently is and continue to be used for park purposes. At some time, the City may need to determine what use—if any—should be made of the former church property, whether that be for park and green space or other uses.

The School District would likely seek another buyer for the old Westwood View school site, and the City would have no control over that sale. The City would not be in a financial position to purchase the property. If future owners of the site present their own development proposals, the City would review those under the City’s zoning regulations but would not otherwise have a say in them or participate in them.

At this time, I have no reason to believe that those statements are not still accurate.

Moving forward, the City Council needs to understand what the City—our residents—would like to see happen. At the same time, the City needs to continue to be honest with our residents about what is feasible. As an example, as part of the 2022 City Facilities Assessment and Feasibility Analysis, the City conducted resident surveys and held an open house, soliciting and obtaining very good feedback from residents on options the City might consider.

66% of survey respondents felt that the best approach to improving City facilities and amenities (such as increased park space) was to leverage available property to generate additional revenues from future development projects. Of the various scenarios presented, the survey respondents’ top choices contemplated development on the site of existing Dennis Park and former church property.

Those 2022 survey results were not reflected in the outcome of the April election. We must now ask our residents—especially those who were opposed to the Karbank project—to bring us feasible ideas for moving forward and the path for getting there. Based on social media posts, letters, flyers, and webpages that we have seen during the election process, ideas have included:

- The City should buy the former Westwood View site and sell off residential lots;
- The City should buy the former Westwood View site and create an 8-acre park;
- The City should ask that Johnson County dedicate funds to develop a new park;
- The City should work with Mission Woods and Westwood Hills to create a park supported financially by all three cities;
- The City should solicit donations through private fundraising;
- The City should let the School District sell the former Westwood View, and the City should raise money in other ways to improve the Dennis Park that we do have, possibly including selling 5050 Rainbow, given the debt on the property; or
- Various mixing-and-matching of these ideas.

As the recent mail-in vote only addressed one question or one aspect of the big picture—whether to convey Dennis Park—the election results may be of limited use in determining what precise alternative options are now preferred by the City’s residents.

what precise alternative options are now preferred by the City's residents.

### What We Know

- As a result of the April 2025 election, Westwood cannot convey Dennis Park. We are keeping that corner piece of land.
- Karbank has officially terminated its contract and all development plans with Westwood and will not be financing the acquisition of any property nor developing its intended commercial project.
- The underlying lawsuit in this matter has been dismissed by the district court.
- The rezoning of the properties was expressly conditioned on "Closing on the sale of the City property". With the election results, and with the Karbank contract terminated, that closing cannot and will not occur. Therefore, the property automatically retains its R-1 single family zoning.
- Westwood's Purchase Agreement with the School District has not, as of yet, been terminated. Terminating the agreement would take formal Council action and the next regular Westwood City Council meeting is scheduled for May 8, 2025.
- The purchase price for the former WWV (including School District carrying costs) is **\$2.785 million**. That is the cost for acquisition only—not demolition, renovation, or any other park development costs. Westwood also has approximately **\$275,000** in debt on 5050 Rainbow, which is not part of Dennis Park.
- Under Westwood's Purchase Agreement with the School District, Westwood's due diligence period expires on **June 1, 2025**, for a July 1, 2025, closing date. June 1 is date by which Westwood must terminate the Purchase Agreement if no funding plan for acquiring the Former WWV is deemed feasible. However, given that the City Council must act in open session as the governing body, the City would likely need to make that feasibility determination by **May 8, 2025**, the date of the next City Council meeting. The City does not currently have funds available for purchasing the former WWV site or making park improvements.
- After the election, the School District confirmed that it intends to recommend to the Board of Education options for marketing and selling the property to other interested buyers. The City does not know what all of those options may include, who potential buyers might be, or what plans they might have for the property.
- The City has been in contact with Johnson County and Johnson County Parks & Rec both before and after the April election. After the election, official representatives from Johnson County/JCPRD confirmed what they had previously told the City, that their current policy (known as the "2024 Legacy Plan") does not provide for County investment in smaller neighborhood parks. Moreover, the County advised that its current plan is severely underfunded, such that the County does not have revenues available for city parks.
- I have been in contact with the mayors of both Mission Woods and Westwood Hills and have shared with the governing bodies of both cities information on general ideas received by the City proposing joint partnerships and/or fundraising through private donations. The City has not received formal feedback yet from Westwood Hills or Mission Woods, though Mission Woods has suggested informally that it would not be in a financial position to be part of any funding for a park.

### Estimated Costs for Developing a 7.5-acre Park

The City's 2022 Facilities Assessment and Feasibility Analysis (performed by Multistudio) did consider the costs for developing a 7.5-acre park as part of its "Baseline Expanded"

development scenario. That Analysis can be accessed here: <https://www.westwoodks.org/projects-and-plans/page/2022-city-facilities-assessment>. Based on both the lower and upper estimates contained in that Analysis, we can estimate the total costs of developing a 7.5-acre park as follows (excluding annual operating costs, which would be on top of this):

Lower End Upper End

Cost to acquire school property	2,650,000.00
SMSD Carrying Costs	135,000.00
Payoff 5050 Rainbow Debt	275,000.00
Demo, grading, develop 7.5-acre park (Multistudio Baseline Expanded; lower estimates)	5,700,000.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>8,760,000.00</b>

Cost to acquire school property	2,650,000.00
SMSD Carrying Costs	135,000.00
Payoff 5050 Rainbow Debt	275,000.00
Demo, grading, develop 7.5-acre park (Multistudio Baseline Expanded; upper estimates)	6,800,000.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>9,860,000.00</b>

Utilizing only the lower-end estimates, and with the assumptions described below, to pay these costs would require a nearly **76%** increase in Westwood’s mill levy:

DEVELOPMENT OF 7.5-ACRE PARK BY WESTWOOD ONLY										
Assumptions:										
	Does NOT include annual operating costs.									
	No participation by Johnson County (JCPRD).									
	Westwood Assessed Valuation excludes property in TIF District (Woodside/Woodside Village).									
	Does NOT include possible mill levy increases for other Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) needs.									
	Acquisition/Improvement Cost	Assessed Valuation (2024)		Assumed Interest Rate	Annual Cost 20-Year Debt	Annual Commitment	Mill Levy Increase	Current Mill Levy	Ending Mill Levy	Mill Levy Increase % Needed
Mission Woods	-	-	0.00%	-	\$0.00	\$0.00	-	13.881	13.881	0.0%
Westwood	8,760,000.00	40,212,552.00	100.00%	4.00%	\$645,000.00	\$645,000.00	16.040	21.119	37.159	75.9%
Westwood Hills	-	-	0.00%	-	\$0.00	\$0.00	-	21.726	21.726	0.0%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>8,760,000.00</b>	<b>40,212,552.00</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>\$645,000.00</b>	<b>\$645,000.00</b>				
Cost to acquire school property	2,650,000.00									
SMSD Carrying Costs	135,000.00									
Payoff 5050 Rainbow Debt	275,000.00									
Demo, grading, develop 7.5-acre park (Multistudio Baseline Expanded; lower estimates)	5,700,000.00									
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>8,760,000.00</b>									

A mill levy rate of 37.159 would make Westwood’s mill levy the highest mill levy of any city in Johnson County.

To be sure, there may be many ways to structure any arrangement, and the above is not intended to be inclusive of all possible options (such as private fundraising, which could reduce the mill levy amounts some). Furthermore, neither Westwood’s Financial Advisor, Bond Counsel, nor City Staff have yet been directed to engage in independently researching and commenting on these figures. That being said, I do believe that the above provides good “ballpark” figures which could be developed further.

However, any such financing would require the issuance of general obligation (GO) bonds. Westwood’s proposal with Karbank would not have had Westwood issuing bonds for the acquisition of park property itself (Karbank was to have financed Westwood’s acquisition on its own). With that option no longer available, the acquisition and improvement of parkland through the issuance of bonds would be subject to K.S.A. 12-1302 which, for acquisition, requires the publishing of two notices in consecutive weeks in the official city newspaper, followed by a protest period of thirty (30) days (similar to that which occurred as to the Dennis Park decision), and a public vote if there is a similar protest.

Simply put, achieving this (the issuance of bonds, in any amount) would be impossible by June 1, 2025, much less by the next City Council meeting, May 8, 2025. Therefore, acquiring the former Westwood View site and developing it for park space is not a practical reality for our City, unless alternative funding or financing—with cash-in-hand to

the City—can be identified prior to May 8.

At the April 2025 Westwood City Council meeting, several residents—including residents of Westwood Hills and Mission Woods—proposed independent fund-raising for park improvements, including cash currently held in other cities' bank accounts, and establishing a “fund” that could be used. The City already has a foundation, the Westwood Foundation, to which donations can be made. The Westwood Foundation's mission statement is as follows:

The Westwood Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in 1974 to provide charitable, educational and benevolent support to the greater Westwood community. The Foundation has one principal mission: providing financial assistance and support to projects and endeavors that benefit the city of Westwood, the immediate surrounding area and, ultimately, the citizens of those communities. The short-term objectives of the Foundation are varied. These objectives range from land acquisition/development to providing revenue to the city of Westwood to offset unexpected expenses and offering educational scholarships to members of our community. Broadly, any financial obligation the Foundation selects to support aims to fulfill its principal mission.

All donations to the Westwood Foundation are tax-deductible. The Westwood Foundation is its own separate entity, with its own Board of Directors that makes decisions as to project funding. More information on the Westwood Foundation can be found at <https://www.westwoodks.org/community/page/westwood-foundation>.

#### **Thank You and Recognition**

I do want to recognize the efforts of the City's Planning Commission, Park Planning Steering Committee, and PORT Urbanism for their efforts in visioning and community outreach. I also want to thank Karbank and the Shawnee Mission School District, both of which, as I have stated before, have been fully supportive of the City and its residents and have proven to be valuable and consistent partners. Of course, I also wish to thank all residents for their engagement during this process and for their strong participation in the mail-in ballot election.

Thank you to all that work to make Westwood the best community that it can be. As always, please continue to take care of each other.



David E. Waters, Mayor

Downloadable PDF available here.

Have remaining questions? Reach out to us here at [info@westwoodks.org](mailto:info@westwoodks.org).

---

City of Westwood, Kansas | Westwood City Hall 4700 Rainbow Boulevard | Westwood, KS  
66205 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)