

*Dec/DeKalb News Era* 51

Show Concern At Meeting

# Homeowners Doubt Future Of Park

By REBECCA W. THOMAS

The Sexton Woods/Chamblee-Dunwoody Homeowners Association, meeting at St. Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church one recent evening, are worried about losing their neighborhood park, Blackburn, to 1996 Olympic aspirations.

Facing a rumor that a tennis stadium would be built in the park, Claudia Gibbons, who was elected president at the meeting, said that she "cannot imagine it being anything but a park for our neighborhood."

After the old Oglethorpe apartment buildings were torn down in the early 1970's, "burying thousands of cockroaches," she said, the park was embraced by the growing families in the area, which lies between Ashford-Dunwoody Rd. and Chamblee-Dunwoody Rd., north of Peachtree-Industrial Blvd.

STATE SEN. JIM Tysinger, speaking before the group, said that other than \$25,000 in state money, the park has been developed by the local people and mentioned the project of a Chamblee High School club which placed all the current playground equipment in the park.

"The county did build the tennis center," he commented. Richard Berkowitz, a community leader and a member of the advisory

board working with the county on improvements to the park, said there is "a feeling of sanctity" about the park. Describing a popular tree-shaded knoll, which dominates the park alongside Ashford-Dunwoody Rd., he said "You can stand on it and see the IBM building."

Following the emotional hearing with Sen. Jim Tysinger and DeKalb County Commissioner, Dist. 1, Jean Williams, who also came to reassure the residents, political candidates running in upcoming elections, spoke to the audience.

MIKE HURST, challenging 10-year veteran Max Davis in the Republican primary District 45 state house race, spoke, following Mr. Davis, and representatives of John Linder and incumbent Ben Jones, vying for the Fourth District congressional seat. Neither Mr. Linder nor Mr. Jones could be present at the meeting.

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## Not Just Courts, Tennis Centers

There are well over 100 public tennis courts scattered around DeKalb County, but unlike most Georgia recreation systems, DeKalb also boasts a pair of tennis centers, complete with pro shop.

Located on Ashford-Dunwoody Road three miles south of I-285, Blackburn Tennis Center is the newer of the two facilities, with 16 full courts and several half-courts for play.

At first glance, the half-courts at Blackburn look strange. They are 25 percent smaller than normal courts and the white lines abruptly pinch inward near the net, as if some belt-tightening were going on.

The game is faster and some say, much more exciting than standard tennis.

For information on lessons at Blackburn, phone weekdays between 9 a.m.-11 p.m. at 451-5504.

The other tennis facility is DeKalb Tennis Center, located at 1400 McConnell Drive, Decatur. (Near the intersection of North

Druid Hills and Clairmont) For more information, phone 325-2520

Other parks having public tennis courts include: Ashford Park, Boudlercrest Park, Briarwood Park, Chapel Hill Park, Emory Grove Park, Henderson Park, Mark Trail, Medlock Park, Midway Park, Murphey-Candler, Shoal Creek, Tobie Grant, and W.D. Thompson.

Several unique programs are provided at the DeKalb tennis facilities, including instruction to deaf tennis players and potential players, and special programs for senior citizen tennis enthusiasts.

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**451-5504**  
Blackburn Center

**325-2520**  
DeKalb Center

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*But, It's Mostly Dead*

# Blackburn Plan Struggles To Climb Out Of Its Grave

By STEVE TEASLEY

DeKalb Chief Executive Officer Manuel Maloof has called "game, set and match" on Olympic tennis in Blackburn Park.

Still, the dead-and-buried idea keeps calling from the grave, begging for one more chance to volley.

It happened again at Tuesday's county commission meeting — one week after Mr. Maloof assured the board that the proposal "is deadlier than a doornail...It's absolutely out-of-the-question."

Once again, a Blackburn Park area property owner, Laurnethia Mesh, came before the commission and insisted that Olympic officials would consider the north DeKalb park for the tennis venue — if only the commission would "write a letter" to Olympic decision-makers and request it.

Mr. Maloof told her he'd talked to the Olympic official, Mike Pinkerton, "who is the man in charge" and had been told that Blackburn won't be considered.

According to the CEO, any contrary information Ms. Mesh might have gotten earlier from another Olympic official "doesn't matter."

Mr. Maloof refused her request to write a letter possibly opening the door for her to meet with Mr. Pinkerton. But, some board members said they'd be willing to look at the letter and consider signing it.

running until Ms. Mesh showed up last month, informing board members that it only needed their support to get back in.

Then, Mr. Maloof last week told board members that he'd checked with Olympic officials who told him they wouldn't consider Blackburn after the cool reception they got in a hearing last January.

He repeated that this week when Ms. Mesh reappeared, contending that the majority in the

community had been "misrepresented" at that hearing and only wanted commission support to compete with the other six sites.

The Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games has narrowed its tennis site choices to six, including two (Sugar Creek Golf and Tennis Center and Stone Mountain Park) in DeKalb.

Members are scheduled to tour Sugar Creek next week. A decision is expected late this month.

MS. MESH, armed with 1,200 signatures which she said support Blackburn Olympic tennis, argues that the site should be considered along with six the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games says are in the running. North DeKalb Commissioner Jean Williams pointed out Tuesday that Olympic officials soured on Blackburn last January when large numbers of area residents said they didn't want the event — or the new stadium and other facilities that go with Olympic tennis.

But, Ms. Mesh contended the anti-tennis group represented a minority of north DeKalb Countians. She said her larger group of pro-Olympic tennis citizens have been "quietly gathering signatures" in support of the proposal. She said the majority of citizens didn't get an opportunity in January to express their views — and "stayed quiet" during the controversy "out of respect for (Olympic organizer) Billy Payne." "We didn't want to embarrass Billy Payne," she said.

COMMISSIONERS thought Blackburn Park was out-of-the-