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Interview with Mayor Richard Mavis

Sara Sanders

Richard Mavis

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Sara Sanders

Interview with Mayor Richard Mavis-at his office, 40 Public Square, Mt. Vernon, OH

2-29-00

no co-workers present

SS-I'll just start by saying that this Sara Sanders, I'm speaking with the mayor of the City of Mount Vernon Richard Mavis at his office on Tues. Feb 29th. How are you doing?

RM-Real good, it's a beautiful day out.

SS-Yes it is.

SS-So I just have a few questions for you and we'll see where the conversation goes. Um, How long have you been a resident of Mount Vernon?

RM-Since 1968. So...about 32 years. I was raised in the county, Sara, I guess I should qualify that. I grew up and graduated from high school down in Danville which is the eastern part of the county. I was educated over at Otterbein College and spent a year in CA, and two years in the city of Wooster and I've been back here ever since.

SS-Um, can you tell a little bit about what it's like to grow up in the county, even if you're not necessarily in the town...

RM-Well, ah, sure, it's small, we should probably-I know you've had this experience of classifying Knox County as kind of a small rural community. Ah, Danville, for instance is about 1,000 people population, I had 60 people in my graduating class. Mt. Vernon is about 15,000, ah, MV has I think 320/30 in their graduating classes, but for the most part we're still, even though the city of MV is classed as a city by population, the school system is a small division I, it's still a pretty rural community here. We have found through surveys when we talk about building highways and connector highways that generally people want to go to Columbus. Now there some who work and do their socializing in Mansfield and also work and do their socializing in Newark and they also go to those areas for professional services. But for the most part, about every survey that we've ever done indicates that the majority of people from this community want to go to Columbus. So Columbus is a metropolitan area, with a million population, with all of the cultural activities and professional services that a person would want or a family would need. So that's kind of- I think that's typical of most rural communities, they tend, they gravitate toward those areas where they can get, whether it'd be medical services or legal services or shopping, the malls are always a big draw. So, people here are very similar as you'd find in other areas. We gravitate toward the larger population areas. We enjoy living in a rural community. Our traffic jams are a lot smaller and shorter in duration. Ah, our schools are a little smaller. We think that there are enjoyments here to be experienced as well as the change of pace of going to Columbus or in some occasions Mansfield or Newark.

SS-And, ah, what makes MV home to you? What are some of your favorite-or what are some of the things that really draw you to this place? What are some of the characteristics that you really like and enjoy?

RM-Well, one of the things that's important to me is knowing-is knowing people. I, you we attend the church here, we know the people in church. I know the people who work at the bank so if I need to have business there I know the people I'm dealing with. I know many of the professional people here. That's kind of a nice feeling is to know people that you're working with. And in politics, of course, you know a lot of people that you don't normally work with but you may have contact with through projects or something other so...I think in a city, that's all

removed. Everything seems like its on a business as usual basis. You don't necessarily know the people you're dealing with except you know inside you're office here. But, so in a rural community, it's possible to know many, many of the people who you do business with or work with or have, have some sort of a project contact with so that's good. The other thing is security, and safety. Ah, it seems like in the smaller towns we don't have to worry about the higher crime rate. Our crime rate is very low. The other thing is, I mentioned traffic, ah, I can leave the office here and be home in 5 mins. Ah, If I go out on Coshocton Road on Friday evening, sometimes that's a little congested, but nothing like you might see in Columbus. So, knowing the people, the friendliness of the community because you know those folks, the interaction, ah, just the ability to work close to where you live, having a community where you can drive, ah, all those things are very positive. Plus the educational system we have is very good. The Kenyon College and Nazarene College both help bring people here that adds a great deal to our community.

SS-Um, How long have you been involved in the local government and why did you decide that that's the road that you wanted to take?

RM-I was educated as a school teacher, as a matter of fact I taught elementary, well, ah upper elementary, 6th, 7th graders for 10 years before I went into politics. The family here, my father was an avid hunter and fisher and trapper and started a sporting goods business back in 1953, moved to MV in 1968, so even though I taught school and coached, I was always involved in the business and so, ah, My father was a county commissioner for two terms and in 1972, elected no to run again. In 1974, I had been teaching for 10 years and it seemed like even though I liked teaching, I found it confining. There had been a little controversy develop in county government after my father had left office, so I decided to run for county commissioner and I was successful in the primary and then was successful in the general election. And was successful then again for five terms, so I was 20 years a county commissioner. I found during that time we did a lot of wonderful things. One of the things we was a little controversial but has become less so and that's the Kokosing Gap Trail. I kind of did the leg work for the government end of that, a fellow by the name of Phil Samuel did the citizen work of that. But we did many good things and that. Now county government is a little different that city government. I, lost the election in 1994, so I had a year out of government, ran in 1995 and took office here in Jan of '96. Then I ran again in '99 and was re-elected to a 2nd term. Government is a public service that's been important to me, it's important to me to do something for the community so as we you know, build fire stations, water treatment plants, highways, tennis courts, ball diamonds, ah, all those things I believe are important to a community and I think we all have a goal in life. And that's mine. When I was teaching school, I love kids-I still like to go back to the classroom and talk about government, that's kind of my thing now, talk about government. We have a lot of young people, elementary age, come here in the Spring. Ah, but then I do go to the college-Nazarene College and I go to the high school here just to talk about what's going on locally so...I think from, at least from my perspective, government was an avenue that allowed me to become part of an active, growing community, and so that's why I have pursued that.

SS-And um, what are some of the things that you're administration is focusing on? Do you have specific goals in mind while you're in office? I mean I know the general work of the city, but are there specific projects that are close to your heart or that you find most important?

RM-Sure. One of the things about our form of government, we're a statutory, in OH, you, cities can elect to have charter governments, MV never did that. They have a statutory form of government which basically says that the mayor of the city will be elected and then he'll hire a

safety service director. The safety service director really does the day to day activity. The mayor gets to do what I call planning. And that was important to me the first time I ran, it was important that we embark on a 5 year or 10 year plan to get certain ah projects completed. And when you talk about Sara, goals, one of the things that I thought would get done in the 1st term was the Coshocton Ave. Improvement Project. It's about a \$4.8 mil project that we initially lost our funding on, now we've kind of rekindled that funding we're ready yo go on that project. But we are kind of goal-oriented, ah, the new water treatment plant was \$16 mil, the new fire station was \$2.4 mil. We have hundred thousand dollar projects, but for the most part, what we're trying to do is establish the priority list of a number of projects whether it'd be streets or water or waste water or parks, try to put those in order and try to realistically ah, put the money in a place where it can be used to develop these projects, so the mayor gets to do that. Now I'm also the person who gives the speeches, I'm also the person who visits places and whether it'd be calling out bingo at the senior citizens center or serving on different boards, all that's part of being mayor.

SS-Is, is the downtown area here, just downtown looking out on the Public Square, is that an issue. You talked a little bit about the Coshocton Road Project, I'd like to hear a little bit more about that.

RM-The downtown, which we consider from downtown area from Chestnut St. through the square to Ohio Ave. And then from Mulberry to Gay St. would be what we call central business district. And yes it is of grave concern to everyone kind of associated with the town and people who have been here for several years because the tendency of most cities our size is the growth goes out to the edge of the city. And we have that, as you just pointed out, we have a couple of strip centers there, recently Kroger announced that they're going to relocate into an older strip center, put a lot of money into it which is going to revive that. Plus we have our Wal-Marts and so forth we're gonna have more restaurants out there. Does that have an impact on downtown, yes it does. A number of our businesses have left downtown, but what has happened, the good new from MV's perspective is that we still have the Public Square here which we treat as a park and then, with that, we still have our 3 main banks downtown, we do have some ah, transition from retailing to office space and regular retailing to an antique center so we're fortunate in that we can keep our store fronts full, but we are having to deal with some transition of business and that's a concern. One of the reasons we all supported the development of the hotel and the convention center downtown was because we knew it would bring people downtown. Those of us who have been actively working on the development or renovation of the Woodward development, I'm sorry, the Woodward Opera House, which is done bu the Woodward Development Co. is that we believe that that is without question the oldest authentic opera house in the country. And ah, with about \$3 mil we can once again make it a draw for downtown, and we think with our restaurants, which we have some wonderful restaurants downtown, with the stores that we have, the convention center and with Woodward down there, plus city government has a seat down there and our banking institutions, we think we can maintain the integrity of downtown.

(Break)

SS-Just to talk a little bit more about Coshocton Road, how, um, in general, how do you think the expansion and the growth that's occurred in MV changed the city?

RM-Well, the reason we have Coshocton growth is because water and sewer were available there. So, generally when businesses want to come in and they're looking for some space to develop, ah, they find where they's public water and public waste water and so that caused the,

that was the immediate reason you had building out there. Where as the west side of town water and sewer up until a couple of years ago didn't exist, so growth out there had been much slower so I think we can readily say that infrastructure determines where growth will be so that's why we have it on the east side. I don't think that the growth out there has been a negative on the city as a whole because most cities have that occur somewhere and they have to deal with it. I think what's kind of interesting um, a year or so ago, the Kenyon Alumni, I'm not sure the name of it, but I get it ah, but they did a story and one of the stories written in there was a local girl who had gone to Kenyon, graduated and then had spent 8 years n the east coast, came home for the first time and saw all this change and it was kind of interesting to read her views of that. And I'm sure there are a lot of people who have experience similar ah events in their lives where they grew up here, left, or maybe they spent some time here working and went away then came back and all of a sudden out on the east side you see all of this urban growth out there and commercial growth. It would have occurred somewhere, the downtown area here is kind of confined, we really didn't have the ability to expand zoning. And zoning is really a key issue, infrastructure first and then getting the proper zoning because you have to have commercial or general business zoning to build something like that. So, I think we've handled it pretty well, I think we're trying to recover from some of the speed at which development took place out there. We didn't do a good job of requiring set backs, services roads, curbs, gutters, storm sewers so part of this Coshocton Avenue Improvement is to go back about 10 years and do now what should have been done back then, but you know, hindsight's always better and I think the administration at that time didn't really have a feel for what was happening to 'em. Since that time, we've lived through it, we know our problems, we've identified 'em and we say now we're gonna fix it. Uh, I think the downtown area can maintain its integrity and still live with the east side development. SS-Just along those same lines, how are you addressing the concerns-I've talked to a few business owners here, and they've talked about, as you said before, they really have had to transform into a specialty type of downtown area, antiques, different boutiques and stuff, and then stores that, um-they just can't compete with K-Mart and Wal-mart and things like that. So, are you making provisions for them, or, I don't even know if that's a job of your's or it's just the way the economy goes when it grows, I'm just wondering?

RM-Well, when I was in business downtown, we had a retail shop, competition with the Wal-, Marts and the K-Marts of the world is always difficult for small business. You know their inventories or in the tens of millions and our inventories the tens of thousands, and a...So people like to shop where are big inventories. But I think one of the things the city does have a responsibility to do and that is maintain the downtown as a nice place to be. We have, as a matter of fact currently we're in our second downtown revitalization grant and this is about \$600,000 that money is made available when the city hires an administrator then he works with the downtown businesses. Most of the money is spent to improve the fronts of their stores, it also improves roofs, side walls, whatever needs to be done on the outside of the building. Although some money can be spent and is spent on the inside, but the city actually applies for this, we achieve the grant and then hire somebody to administer it. This allows them to keep the downtown stores attractive, it also works-this summer we're going to replace the brick crosswalk, we're also going to re-pave downtown, we're gonna fix up our handicapped access ramps, ah, so I think the city has an obligation. Yes it costs money, it costs \$12,000 just to prepare the application. But I think we need to do that. We want to achieve one more grant because we're permitted to get three of them total and the next one we want to replace the downtown lamps, the ornamental lamps we have down there. They get, they're getting sort of

aged now. And the other thing we're doing with the help and support of the Shadetree Commission is going in , and many of the trees that were planted twenty years ago now have outgrown their places in the sidewalk so we did do a sample replacement this Fall with four knew trees just to see if we could take the old ones out and re-plant the new smaller ones with a little different variety and it seemed to work. So over the course of the next five years we'll probably replace all those tress. We'll want to do the ornamental lamps, ah, those are the kind of things I think the city has the responsibility to...we can't shovel the snow off their walks, we can't sweep their walk, we can't make their signs look better, they need to do that. But the city does have a responsibility and that's the way we're approaching it.

SS-Do you see this change both in the downtown area and the growth to the east of town as a sign of the encroachment of Columbus at all?

RM-I think that's part of it. The city of MV between 1980 and 1990 had very little growth, we say less than 400 people. We now say they did not do a mid-decade census, so speculating that we're over 15,000 and my guess is we'll be over 15,500 or close to 16,000, which would be about a 1500 person growth. We're also annexing territory in now, which was kind of in a lull for a while. Yes, I think all of that is, can be attributed somewhat to the Polaris development and the Easton development and of course we have a lot of development in Sunbury which is just down the road. I think MV needs to prepare, because I think you'll see a lot of residential development because it's only a 40 min drive to work if you're working on the north or east side of Columbus. So we need to prepare for that and we're trying to do that. We have a ten year plan for water and waste water, we're trying to work on our roads. We have a plan to extend the Gilchrist road over to 229. So everything has to be ah, put in place as a priority, plans have to develop-be developed, and funds have to be put in place. Same with S. Main St., we're gonna widen that, where MV Ave comes into S.Main, we're gonna run that straight across the intersection there and put a traffic signal in there and it will make traffic flow out the high school and MV Ave.-Edgewood connector. So we're trying to do all those things and against's probably over-you're always planning three to five years ahead and then some long term things you're looking at ten years ahead.

SS-Do you think, um, all this change is going to have an affect on the character of life here? The way people live, or what really makes this home to some of the lifelong residents?

RM-Well I think it, ah, I guess in my opinion it will. I don't think we can stop, I mean I'd say my first thought is we can't stop it, we need to control it where we can. We have preservationists here and I'm one of them to a certain extent. We have nine miles of brick streets, we need to preserve those, there's a couple of those we need to look at as far as through traffic streets. We need to look our traffic patterns because I think we need to keep traffic off residential streets, we need to try to keep the big trucks off the downtown area. The city has a responsibility to do all that. Ah, the integrity of life in MV and the MV surrounding community is a grand quality right now. I would be very disappointed, whether it's, whether it's my administration or some future administration if we don't do everything we canto protect that and at the same time allow any, I mean, you can't stop growth. I mean it doesn't make a difference what you do zoning-wise, or what you do ordinance legislation, you can't stop growth. So what we try to do is identify, ah, you know where our priorities are, have a strong zoning character about us, and we do , we do continually work on that. So, I think it will impact us, but I think we can still maintain our rural integrity.

SS-Um, along those same lines, can you describe Focus 2100, for me a little bit? I don't want to be redundant, but just some of the main points.

RM-Well, Focus 2100 was a comprehensive plan for the community, ah the last one that was done was 1974, and since I be-went into office as county commissioner in 1975, one year after it was completed, I've been a spokesman to everyone that will listen saying that in 1974, we did a comprehensive plan and absolutely no one used it. It went on the shelf, no one ever looked at it, I looked at it a few to get-to look at specific areas. One of the things that we said in Focus 2100 is this is a living document, we need to put committee structures in place and no matter who's mayor or who's commissioner or, or who's trustee or council member or who's head of this or head of that, the structure will allow the, the flexibility to exist with in Focus 2100. In Focus 2100 they outlined where roads are gonna be, where water and waste water is gonna be, where subdivisions can grow, where industrial areas are. Now that's good, it creates a pretty structured plan, but at the same time, over a period of time that changes alittle bit. This, through the committee process and through the continual revisiting of the document I think we can use this as a our guide and this will be different-and I know there are those people who say well you did one in '74 and it was a flop, you did one in '98, will it work? And the answer I can give to that I think the mechanisms in place to keep Focus 2100 at the forefront and kind of acting as our guide to determine where roads, where water/waste water, where subdivision, where zoning for manufacturing, commercial, and that sort of thing will be. I think it will work.

SS-Um, I guess this is just a more broad question. Ideally, what would you like to see happen, I guess in terms of growth, or anything in terms of MV. What direction do you want to see the community and the city go in.

RM-When we built the, we had to make the decision a couple of years ago on where the new fire station would be. I think for years people thought the new fire station should move to the east end because that's where the growth was. But on the other hand, most of the commercial buildings out there are modern, they have good sprinkling systems, we have good water supply out there. Downtown the building are old, without sprinkler systems and the rule of thumb was get somewhere in four minutes and where is that place of origin you can get anywhere in the city in four minutes? Well the best location was the location where we were, there was one location a little better but we didn't think zoning would work for us. So we ended up buying the block where the old fire station was and we have a new one down there. But in that decision making process we had to look at where we thought the city would grow. And we determined that we want Gilchrist road, for the most part to be as far east as we'll go-granted the commissioners are talking about building a jail just east of Gilchrist, the health department's gonna build a new building right at the intersection, but the commercial zoning is on the west side of Gilchrist. That's where the new theater is, he new motel, there will continue to be office buildings and retailers developed there. I think that's as far east as we should push development. We think beyond that, we think the west, Harcourt road area will be the next pressurized place to develop.

Because waste water is there now, probably within two years there'll be water there. We think they'll be residential development because it's 15 min closer to go to Columbus from there than it is on the east side of town. So, we think residential development will occur, we'll see grocery stores, commercial strip stores develop there because water and waste water will be there and the access to 229 west and 36 and 3 south and west is readily available there. So we gambled, because from the new station we can get to Harcourt Rd. in less than 4 min, so we new if we saturate the east side then we go to the west side, then we're gonna be in excellent position. We think the south and the north ends have some potential for mostly residential development, and as we satellite locations for satellite fire and medical stations, ah, we do see satellites put out in the north and south over the next ten or twenty years.

SS-And what some of you're main concerns for the future. Um, what are the things that you're worried about, aside from the...?

RM-We mentioned earlier about the changing image. I don't think MV, one the things that I continually here as I travel to other communities is MV a beautiful city with it's public square, its colonial and federalist architecture that's available. So I would always want to maintain some sort of policy and plan that helps retain that as much as possible. Ah, I think beyond that, ah, watching the city grow and and, and kind of directing the growth should be the goal of every city administrator, and it goes back to this feeling of where it should be without ruining the integrity of our residential areas. We have to have jobs, the fear I have is that it takes money to , our biggest, I'm sorry our largest expense areas are police and fire/medical. People expect those areas and in order to maintain a police force of sufficient size and fire and medical force of sufficient size it takes tax dollars to do that. Primarily, our income comes from income tax revenues so if you live or work inside the city you pay the 1.5%. There are some efforts to erode that away from municipalities if it would happen, that's a fear of mine, we wouldn't be able to pay our forces. The other thing is getting that income to such a place where we can hire enough people to serve the area. So those are primary, I mean there are a number of other concerns I have, but it will be necessary to, ah, make sure the police force has adequate personal, same with medical and fire. The utility can always be assessed. If you build a new water plant, which we've done or a new sewer plant or you extend lines, there's always user fees and assessment to pay for that. But policemen, you can't do that and fire you can't do that. So those are I guess major concerns.

SS-Just to go away from those issues, what role do you see the Kokosing playing in the community here? Um..

RM-The Kokosing River?

SS-mm-hmm.

RM-Well it's always been critical to us. When it was declared a scenic river in OH, it ah, probably not known to many people it created a little problem for us because the, the 1959 flood that devastated about a third of the city was caused because the dike was breached down here in the west side of the city. After that the corps of engineers came in and said we will rebuild your dike but you must each year, you must look at the dike, determine what needs to be done to kind of sure it up again from the winter's floods and so forth. So, when the scenic river was declared by the Kokosing, um, they also said we couldn't get in there with bulldozers and push the sandbars out. So we really had two state agencies I'm sorry, one federal agency, one state agency. SO the federal said, if you don't maintain the channel through the city, then you're gonna lose the support of the corps of engineers. And the state agency, which was the scenic river group said well you can't go in and use a bulldozer in this stream because it causes interruption to aquatic life. To the credit of both agencies, we called a meeting and asked them to both come in and there was an agreement reached that we can go in ah, basically as the Kokosing runs through the city, we can go in and push out the sandbars and make the water flow more freely which was necessary for us. But the river itself, even at the confluence where the Dry Creek runs into it has long been part of our culture here. Whether it be fishing or whether jumping off he old railroad trestle, what have you, ah, it's been part of our culture here. And then when the Kokosing Gap Trail came along, it became even a larger part of that because the trail pretty much follows the river valley for a long time. But the, it's just part-I'm not sure if it can play a bigger role, ah, maybe it can. There's been some talk about riverfront development, whether it be an amphitheater, whether it'd be some sort of a trail right along the riverbank,

along the dike way. We will eventually extend Kokosing Gap Trail, we have a nature works grant that has been partially funded to run Kokosing Gap trail up on the dike way onto the main street of town. And then there's another plan to run it on through town on the dike way. So the Kokosing is really part of our recreation, ah, it's part of just the natural living in our community so I don't, I'm not sure if I can identify every aspect of life that it impacts but it's a part of all of our lives.

SS-Just on a personal note, do you have any fun stories about it that you'd like to share, or, any of your favorite memories?

RM-Well the Kokosing runs to the east side of the county, so since I grew up down there, as a kid as I mentioned earlier, my dad was an avid fisherman so in my younger years I was also. The Kokosing was always a favorite place because it always is a habitat for small mouth bass and catfish and that sort of thing so. We have, I suppose the most memorable time is the, putting a flat bottom boat on the Kokosing and going to drift fish down to another location. At that time, the Kokosing is impacted a great deal by the lack of rain so you know the Spring and early Summer there's a great flow of water. you can canoe and flat bottom raft all the way down. But in the late summer when you get into late July and Aug., the water level's lower so I think my worst experience was being in a flat bottom boat and for the most part having to carry the boat or drag the boat for about 2 mi. 'Cause once you start there are no roadways that you continually cross. So once you're in the river, you're in the river, but...It has been I think anyone who grew up in this community, no matter whether it's MV, or Danville, or Millwood, or Howard, or Apple Valley, the river is part of some relationship they have had, whether it'd be fishing or canoeing or boating or something like that so. But it is, fishing I have many tales about catching big fish and of course as a kid the fish always seem bigger than they probably were, but ah. We always waded, when we had the sporting goods store we sold live bait. And so we would go to the Kokosing and (?) for hellgrammites, we did mostly hellgrammites but there were also some crawfish we used, there were occasionally some minnows we took, but minnows came out ah, of smaller streams. Back in those days you got your own bait, there weren't these bait dealers that came around in this trucks that were all structured to haul minnows and hellgrammites and what have you, so, I've walked a lot of miles in the river.

SS-Final question for myself and then I'm going to ask these. Um, for somebody who's gonna take this driving tour that is gonna take them from Waterford all the way down to...Greer. So for someone who's been taking this tour and finally gets to Andrew Craig and to downtown MV, what would you like them to know and see about the town. Um, what can I really do to bring out the character of downtown or just MV in general?

RM-Well, the state of OH going to celebrate its bicentennial in 2003. MV will celebrate its bicentennial in 2005. And in the process of getting ready to celebrate the OH and then later our bicentennial, one of the things we're doing locally is finding out about ourselves historically. And we have Johnny Appleseed historical marker, we have the mother Bickerdite, we're talking about the Landingham Civil War speech that was given on the Public Square here. Everyone one is kind of a little more interested in that because of this bicentennial rapidly approaching. So, this town, even though sometimes if you drive through it sometimes you see the beauty of it, but often times you don't recognize the history of it. And, ah, being developed between 1803-1805, it does have a lot of history. We were clearly named after MV which was George Washington's home town. And ah, the river running through it adds to the quality of life we have here and I guess I would say to people, MV is kind of in the middle of the county if you start at Fredericktown and come on by the city on your way, they should take special note of

some of the more historical significance part, besides the beauty we have. And I find it interesting, I've live all my life and I've found out more in he last 2-3 years as we've worked toward the bicentennial season. So I would, I would recommend that people at least learn a little bit about our history. We had four Civil War generals come from here. One of the interesting things that I read, in the class of 1861, I believe, there were five boys in the graduating class of MV high because they had no girls that year. And in the Spring of that year he principle and the five boys all went off to the Civil War. They just kind of left and took off, I thought that was unbelievable that that would happen but back in those days the Civil War was the primary event. And that's why as we look at 1863 in the end of May that year they gave a speech that was kind of ant-war because at that time the North had not won any significant battles so they had 11,000 people on the public square with no p.a. system. The guy stood on kind of a scaffolding type that was erected. So a lot of things have happened here, I find it intriguing to read, having lived here and been part of that so I recommend it.

SS-Well let's move on to the gravel pit and I don't know much about it right now so I'll just ask what she's written down. I guess this is all based on, there was an article in the MV News, okay. So what is, she's, okay the time frame for the sale of he gravel pit is not certain so, is the actual sale probable or not?

RM-The ah, the gravel pit known as Goodwin Sand & Gravel, but it's owned by the Shelly Co., they have completed the mining operation there so, whenever you complete a mining operation you have to submit to the state bureau of mines a reclamation plan, most people, when you have strip mining you have to reclaim the land after it's finished. They have their plan approved, the Shelly Co.'s present owner, and this summer mostly will be a time when they can do their final grating, their topsoil and their seeding. We have met with them and their asking price is about \$350,000 for about 80 acres, of he 80 acres, about 2/3 of it is water. Two very nice lakes, there's also some other nice areas there, immediately along the Kokosing, but there is a separation, the river doesn't flow in and around the gravel pit there openly but ground water probably. So our plan and we do have the support of council, presently we're negotiating with an appraiser to go in and appraise the ground. Ah, the community trust has said we will support you to buy it. The \$350,000 is clearly an asking price, we would expect to buy it for somewhat less than that, but it is our goal to buy it within this year, the calendar year 2000, and establish it as not a ball diamond, soccer playing park, but more as a recreational where either walking, perhaps certainly canoeing, fishing, that sort of thing we probably will discourage swimming even though the lake will be suitable for that, it's a liability. But we would eventually expect to put a shelter up for picnicking, maybe restrooms. But for the most part it will be one of those parks where you can relax, ah, bike, walk, there will probably be trail established in it. And we think that if you've ever looked at that area-the aerial photo they had in the newspaper wasn't too bad but it was Winter so it was difficult to see the whole thing, but he old PPG plant is immediately to the south and we think if this develops as a nice recreation area it will encourage people to kind of rekindle the idea of renovating PPG. Currently, they have a number of small industries in there, but if it were fixed up and taken better care of, we think it could be a real nice industrial site. And this may help that.

SS-What provoked this idea, I guess she'd wondering, is there a lack of recreation space, or?

RM-One of he things Focus 2100 said was that we did have a lack of green space in the

community. Now in the city of MV we have 80 acres total. And most of that is ball diamonds, soccer fields, ah, some tennis courts, the swimming pool of course is part of that. But not a lot of places where you can just go and walk or ride your bike without having to worry about traffic and that sort of thing. So this would be a different kind of park, plus it would double the green space that we have. So we were, I personally was motivated because of that. The other thing that makes the strong point for the city is that it immediately joins our senior citizens station break which was a railroad property that we purchased a number of years ago, so if we acquired this, the parking lot that is currently used for station break could also be used for that, so there were at least more than one reason that we were especially interested.

SS-What type of developer are you hoping to attract with the old industrial area?

RM-Well, first of all, maybe I should state that most of this property is in the flood plain so any kind of building would be very difficult, but if the question is related to what impact this will have on some of that blighted, the old PPG, the old Lamb's Glass, my feeling is that industries today are continually looking for employees, ah, quality employees and most of those or many of those like recreation areas. They like opportunities whether it be at lunch or their time off before or after work, we think this would have a very positive impact on an industrial developer who may want to come in here and do that because you could say look in the back yard here we have 80 acres of lake and walking paths, bicycle paths, jogging whatever you'd want to do. So I think from that perspective, it's a good plan. We would not intend to sell any of this to any kind of a developer, we would expect to put, as I've said, a restroom, a shelter, develop some paths and that sort of thing.

SS-What is the long term goal for the area by the viaduct?

RM-The, ah, one of the things I'm not sure, the viaduct area deserves some consideration. The big railroad trestle to the east of the viaduct is privately owned and I'm not sure what the plan for that is. We have looked at that about putting a deck in that and as we bring Kokosing Gap Trail up the dike way, since the congestion right at the viaduct is a problem, we thought about using that bridge to go across the, back across the Kokosing, and then come up and cross it would be on the north side of the bridge. Ah, it would allow people who are coming off the trail and want to get to the hotel or get to a downtown restaurant or the business places without having to ride their bike across the viaduct. The viaduct is a dangerous place, it's a historic bridge, it doesn't look like there's an easy way to expand it or widen it. So we talked about that. The other bridge, ah, which would be on the west side of the viaduct, that railroad bridge is currently being used but is on the schedule for abandonment. We would hope to tie that in with our trail system through town. Ah, the senior citizen center is ours, we expect that to be maintained as a senior citizen center, it's gonna, there is a plan to expand it. Parking, additional parking, additional development around the Dan Emmet House is also there, tie that into the park. SO I personally do not believe it's gonna be possible to do too much with what would be classed as a riverfront development because we have too much fluctuation in our flood waters there. So we will probably not intrude on the channels itself.

SS-Do you have a time goal when ideally this park will be open?

RM-I think it will take us at least much of this year to negotiate and get control of it. The people, the present owners said if we moved quickly in purchasing, they would have to have an agreement to come in and finish all the reclamation work. So my goal right now is to have, hopefully it's realistic, is to have it open as a park in the Spring of 2001, which would be about a year from now. I don't know that we'll have restrooms and shelters available, but I think the park would be available for use even though it might be more of a primitive type.

SS-And so whenever it goes through the reclamation process that means that all the mining projects are done. All the gravel is out the pits?

RM-Yeah, the mining is complete. What they have to do now is over the course of the years they've piled up a lot of materials and they have to come in and put contours in and grade that all off so you don't have steep banks and that sort of thing. They have to put topsoil in and reseed it and we've had people already volunteer to plant trees and that sort of thing. So, I think over the years it will evolve as a nice community park, not, and I don't want to mislead people, this is not one where we're gonna put additional ball diamonds and that sort of thing. I think the ball diamonds will pretty much stay in the areas where they are.

SS-Okay, alright well that's about it. Thank you very much for your time.

RM-Well, you've got a pretty ambitious project.