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# Park supporters rally to MCC meeting

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Neil Merrilees addresses the council and a standing-room only crowd at the MCC meeting on Wednesday night to discuss the recent sale of the Moss Beach Park. Bill Murray / Review

Dozens of families gathered to show support for Moss Beach Park at a packed Midcoast Community Council meeting on Wednesday night. They urge any action necessary to save it. Parents and local leaders described feeling both disbelief and anger upon learning that the neighborhood-built park had been recently sold in a tax auction.

A litany of speakers referred to the park as a true community success story. In 2004, some 400 volunteers chipped in to turn a ramshackle yard off Virginia Avenue in Moss Beach into the Midcoast's premier playground.

Many in the audience described feeling total shock upon learning in recent days that the park was on the verge of being transferred to a developer.

"This park was built with the money and sweat of the people in the community," said Midcoast father Mark Verlander. "I don't want to place blame, but it has to be found out what went on."

"This is all we have," said Lisa Gilmour, a mother at the meeting. "I hope we get to the bottom to whatever happened, but it's more important that we look forward and we have our park taken care of."

San Mateo County officials have reported that the landowner of the park, the nonprofit Coastside Preservation and Recreation Inc., was delinquent for more than five years in its property tax payments. The parkland, identified only by its parcel number, went up for an online auction starting on July 20. A Pacifica developer took the property with a bid of \$96,500. He has announced no plans for the property so far.

Past board members for the Coastside Preservation group are still trying to learn how the nonprofit defaulted on its obligations. Many of the group's leaders who helped spearhead the 2004 playground construction left the board soon afterward. That left only one or two people managing the nonprofit.

"I know that mistakes were made," said past board member Mary Kate Meyerhoffer at the meeting. "It never should have been left in the hands of a couple people in the community."

Many attendees indicated that the top priority should be to find out how to preserve the park. A new Facebook page and Change.org petition sprouted up this week to help save the park.

Nick Calderon, an aide for supervisor Don Horsley, said he was speaking with county attorneys on a daily basis about how to preserve the park. He apologized that he couldn't provide details or make any commitments.

The Midcoast Community Council voted to create an ad hoc committee to find solutions for the park. The council also agreed to send a letter to Horsley emphasizing the urgency for saving the park. .