Letter to the Editor:

**How much did the Town of Middleton pay for Pope Farm Conservancy?**

In the June 6th edition of the Middleton Times-Tribune, it was reported that the Pope Farm Conservancy was donated by the Pope family to the Town of Middleton. On June 13th, a correction was requested by the Town of Middleton (TOM) stating that the Town paid the Pope family $1 million for the land. Neither version is correct.

In 1999, the TOM paid the Pope family approximately $2.3 million for 145 acres which represented approximately 20% of the fair market value at the time. A critical part of the agreement was that the TOM could sell 40 acres on the eastern portion of the property at fair market value (to offset the original purchase price of $2.3 million).

In 2005-6, the TOM sold those 40 acres to the Middleton Cross Plains Area School District (MCPASD), and the Pope family was party to that agreement. In order to deal with a number of legal issues, the land was deeded back to the Pope family and the Pope family deeded the property back to the TOM with additional restrictive covenants (primarily height restrictions) so that the view to Lake Mendota and the Capitol from the hilltop in the Conservancy would be protected. The 40 acres was sold by the TOM to the MCPASD for $4 million.

The math for the original purchase of the 145 acres and the subsequent sale of the 40 acres was now on record. **The TOM received $4 million from the MCPASD sale to defray the original cost, which was approximately $2.4 million ($2.3 million plus expenses). Thus, the TOM gained the 105-acre Conservancy at no cost—PLUS a $1.6-million windfall.**

The Pope family insisted that since this land was originally intended for green space, that the $1.6-million windfall be used for TOM parks, trails and conservancies. The parties agreed, and the funds from the windfall were used to create the TOM Park Fund to be held in a special segregated fund for those purposes. The interest earned by or proceeds of investments in the Park Fund would remain in the Park Fund. This fund still exists today.

This math is reflected in an agreement dated September 12th, 2005, between members of the Pope family, the TOM, and the MCPASD. All three parties to the agreement were ecstatic, especially the family. The 105-acre Conservancy could now be enhanced and maintained for decades with no cost to the TOM.

Sincerely,

Mel Pope