

Contract okayed for Wild Basin

A contract for the purchase of the first 24 acres of land in the Wild Basin wilderness park area near West Lake Hills was approved by county commissioners Monday.

But commissioners said they want to be sure the citizens group raising money for the land acquisition actually has the money and will turn it over to the county.

If such assurances cannot be made, commissioners said, the contract will not be valid.

The estimated cost of the land is \$161,000, said Janet Poage of the Wild Basin committee, adding that half will come from the federal government and the remainder from funds raised and given to the county by the Environmental Conservancy of Austin and Travis County.

Pct. 4 commissioner Richard Moya voted against approval of the contract, saying there are "still a lot of questions unanswered" about the project.

Moya said he is afraid land acquisition costs will increase if the county has to condemn the land to buy it and said commissioners should go on record saying they will not condemn any land for the park.

Condemnation proceedings would result in a jury setting the value of the land, and Moya said he fears the county would end up paying more than it has budgeted for the land.

Although commissioners Ann Richards and Bob Honts said they, too, have misgivings about condemnation, the court did not adopt a formal policy against condemnation.

In other action, commissioners formally approved an increase in the price of coffee in the courthouse snack bar. The increase, effective Wednesday, will raise the price from the current 15 cents to 19 cents, plus a penny tax.