

French Island resident wants to buy old dump land for gardening

OLD TOWN – A French Island resident hopes to purchase a small parcel of city land adjoining his own so he can expand the gardening he has been doing on it.

Jim Mitchell, who lives on property adjacent to what used to be an old city dump, has been doing some raised bed gardening on that land in recent years. Mitchell had approached the city in the past about buying the property, but was rebuffed over liability concerns. A city sewer line runs through the property.

Mitchell, who likes to teach others to garden and hopes that he can provide an example for others to grow their own food throughout the city, came before the city council last week to repeat his request. He said he has been trying on and off for about ten years to buy the property; he would like to be able to do so soon, as it needs some brush removed and other work before raised beds can be placed on it. Mitchell added that because of the costs and time involved in building and maintaining the beds, he would like a more permanent arrangement. It has only been in recent years that the property, which the city more or less abandoned, has been maintained, by Mitchell in the past few years and another family for a few years previously.

Mitchell said he did not see why the city would need to worry about liability, as his homeowners insurance would take care of that and absolve the city of

any claims. He added that if there was a need for an easement for the sewer line, he would be happy to provide that.

“An abandoned piece of property would have a useful purpose,” he said.

Councilors agreed to look further into the issue and to review some documentation Mitchell provided just prior to the meeting. They are expected to review the matter again at a meeting in April.