

1017 oppose pool plan

City councillors accept petition

By DI THOMAS

OPPONENTS of Wodonga council's set-aside plan to build an aquatic centre at Willow Park have handed a petition of 1017 signatures to two of the city's councillors.

Crs Rodney Wangman and Jenny Hanuska accepted the petition from members of the Save Willow Park Group which collected the signatures including those from 920 Wodonga residents representing 448 streets in the city.

Cr Wangman said he was happy to receive the petition which would be discussed by council before its meeting on Monday.

A member of the Save Willow Park Group, Alison Mitchell, said Crs Wangman and Hanuska were among four councillors who had voted for the pool proposal at Willow Park and who had been invited to receive the petition.

Crs John De Kruiff and Anna Speedie had been unavailable.

Ms Mitchell said she was cautiously optimistic about the success of a motion expected to be raised by Cr Speedie on Monday night to rescind the council's original decision.

She said after Monday's public forum where Wodonga Mayor Cr Lisa Mahood announced the council would not act on its Willow Park decision, opponents of the project invited residents to another public meeting on Wednesday night where 25 people began "brainstorming" ideas to put to the council.

"One of the suggestions we want to put to councillors is that they have community representation on an advisory committee in relation to the pool," she said.

John Hind said an advisory group would work with the council to have some impact on the terms of reference of the submission and consultation process offered by the council last Monday night.

Mr Hind suggested a second research group would look at the real cost of rebuilding the existing facility at Stanley St.

Julie Hind said other suggestions included the creation of a residents' association for the city and a Friends of Wodonga Parklands committee to help protect the city's open spaces.

"This is an important issue. People do not understand the therapeutic values of parkland as places of reflection," Mrs Hind said.

"The message is not getting through to the council. They think we're concerned with 3ha but what other park allows this reflection of quietness and tranquility?"

"We want to work with the council proactively but we don't want to be having this fight in three years' time when they want to put something else here."

"We have also thought about setting up a blog to allow community input," she said.



• **Wolfgang Huber from the Save Willow Park group hands a petition objecting to the aquatic centre proposal with 1017 signatures to councillors Rodney Wangman and Jenny Hanuska yesterday. Picture: SIMON GROVES**