



# Anderson Twp. park oversight sought

By Lisa Wakeland • lwakeland@communitypress.com • November 19, 2010

Business owner Mark Schmidt has asked the Anderson Township Board of Trustees for more oversight of the Anderson Township Park District.

Schmidt, who led a petition drive seeking Park District reforms earlier this month, relayed his concerns about the synthetic field construction at Riverside Park and the denial of an easement for a planned sanitary sewer line through the park to the trustees at last night's meeting.

"I come to you as a body to ... enact some type of oversight to control the spending, the decision making or at least to execute some form of checks and balances that will provide for a better use of our tax dollars," he said.

"I disagree with the way the decisions are made and I find myself as a citizen handcuffed with any ability to have an impact against that form of decision making."

The Anderson Township Board of Trustees can not legally regulate the Park District or Board of Park Commissioners, Trustee Peggy Reis said.

She added that the Park District and park commissioners are autonomous organizations, but the township trustees have the authority to appoint the Board of Park Commissioners.

Trustee Russ Jackson said they are also responsible to authorize the Park District to place a levy on the ballot.

Anderson Township residents approved the Park District's 1.9-mill operating levy in 2008. That levy is on a 10-year cycle and brings in roughly \$2.2 million annually, Park District Executive

Director Ken Kushner said.

"My thought is public money needs to be spent wisely," Trustee Kevin O'Brien said.

"More public input should have been sought on both sides - not only from the Park District but the sewer district - in particular where these two bodies have some overlap."

Schmidt has said that the Park District effectively blocked the sewer line construction - scheduled to begin in 2012 - to build the synthetic turf field.

The field, permeable pavement parking lot and trail cost slightly more than \$2 million.

Park District officials refused to grant a 20-foot permanent easement in front of Riverside Park for the sewer line and have said the easement would affect field use and future park development.

The Metropolitan Sewer District is investigating whether the sewer line can be moved across Round Bottom Road, but estimates that will increase the project cost by hundreds of thousands of dollars.

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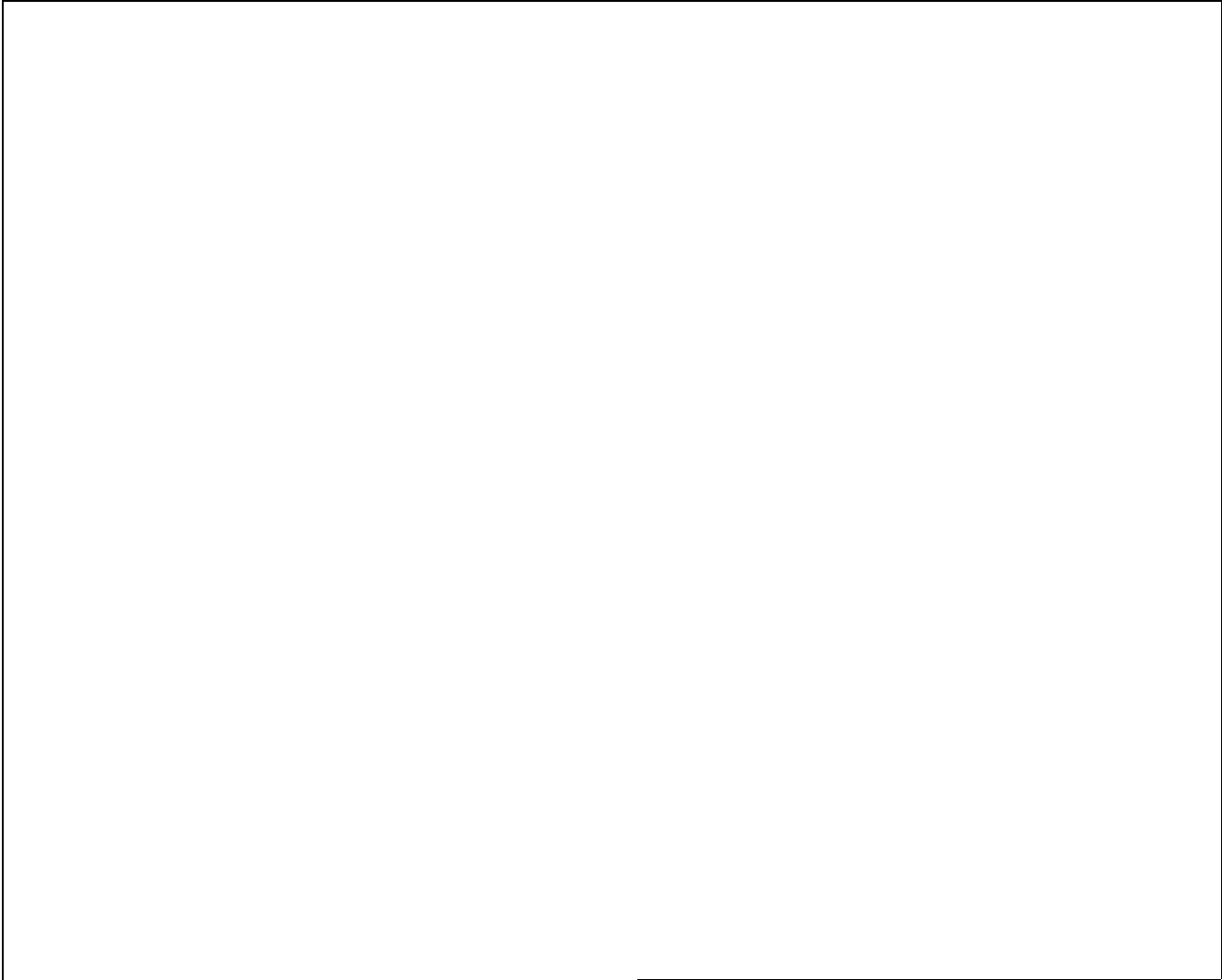
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