

Anderson Parks commit to Beech Acres, discuss millage

Sheila Vilvens, svilvens@communitypress 1:43 p.m. EDT April 23, 2015



(Photo: Sheila Vilvens/The Community Press)

Anderson Township Park District is committed to moving forward with a land purchase, but continues to weigh options regarding a bond levy amount.

During a special meeting April 21, the Board of Park Commissioners directed Executive Director Ken Kushner to notify Beech Acres Parenting Center of its intent to place a bond issue on the November ballot. Money generated by the bond, if approved, would enable the purchase from Beech Acres of the RecPlex and 28 acres along Beechmont Avenue that adjoins the park district's Beech Acres Park.

The board has a May 8 deadline to make its intentions known to the parenting center, Board President Dale Bartholomew said.

Earlier this month, at two separate meetings, the board approved two bond issue amounts to potentially place before voters – a 1-mill bond and .7-mill bond.

The 1-mill, 20-year bond issue would raise nearly \$24.5 million. The additional cost to homeowners would be \$35 for every \$100,000 market value. Levy passage would enable the park district to buy the RecPlex, the park district's only indoor recreation facility, and land along Beechmont Avenue for \$5.4 million. The park district leases the RecPlex from Beech Acres Parenting Center. Additionally, if approved, the bond levy would provide enough funds to make upgrades and improvements to the RecPlex and the district's other parks and facilities.

The 0.7-mill, 15-year bond issue would raise more than \$12.8 and cost the owner of a \$100,000 home \$24.50 per year. This would provide enough money to buy and renovate the RecPlex and purchase the 28 acres.

Another millage amount being discussed is 0.8-mills for possibly 15 years. This would raise over \$14.6 million per year and cost the owner of a \$100,000 home \$28 per year. This bond amount would allow for the same as the 0.7-mills plus allow for a little extra money for unforeseen issues that frequently arise during renovation projects.

The board will continue its discussion at its next regular meeting, 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 12, at the Julifs Park Office, 8249 Clough Pike.

At that same meeting, the board will hear a presentation from John Fox Consulting regarding the findings of a recent park district survey. Survey results are available on the park district's website, April 15 – www.andersonparks.com (<http://www.andersonparks.com/>).

During the April Anderson Township Board of Trustees meeting, Trustee Josh Gerth said that there are alternative plans being considered for the Beech Acres property, but nothing concrete as yet. The trustees are hopeful that they will soon have something to present to the community, he said.

Park District Vice President Nadine Gelter said there is still nothing specific in place regarding alternative plans or partnerships with private or public entities for purchase and/or development of Beech Acres. Because of this, she said that the board should continue moving forward.

Gelter restated her support of a lower millage bond issue.



"I think it's pretty clear from the survey that people are in favor of purchasing the property for public use," she said. What's not as clear is now people want the land used.

"I think we should ask for what it takes to purchase the property and rehab the RecPlex," she said.

Bartholomew and board members Tom Turchiano and Angie Stocker agreed.

"I think the most important thing is to secure the property," Turchiano said. "Once we secure the property I think there are partnerships we can get to develop the property."

He expressed a concern that 0.7-mill bond might not be enough money to achieve the purchase and renovation of the RecPlex. Instead he suggested a .8-mill would be a better choice.

Stocker agreed and said that a 0.7-mill bond is too low.

Bartholomew said the bond amount needs to be high enough to provide enough reserves to get matching fund grants. Some of the grants the park district has recently considered require matches of 40 percent or 50 percent.

"I think we're good at getting those grants," he said.

Board Member Rob Herking said that he still supports a 1-mill bond. He has three children that enjoy the parks. He's open to lower amounts if that's the wish of the other board members, he added.

The board has until Aug. 5 to file its bond issue with the Hamilton County Board of Elections in order to appear on the November ticket.

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Aquarian Pools & Spas advertisement featuring a smiling sun logo with sunglasses. The text reads: "Enjoy summer in a new backyard pool or spa!" Below this is a photograph of a large, modern backyard pool with a stone deck and landscaping. Further down, it says "Anniversary Sale April 25th thru May 3rd!". At the bottom left is a photo of outdoor furniture (chairs and a table) near a pool. To the right of this photo, it says "Spring Savings on Mallin Outdoor Furniture & Grills!". At the very bottom, a blue banner says "CLICK NOW for more info »".

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