

Anderson Park Board talking land, levy

Sheila Vilvens, svilvens@communitypress.com 10:41 a.m. EDT September 15, 2015



The Beech Acres property purchase and associated levy are expected to be discussed during a special meeting of the Anderson Township Park District 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 15, at the park district headquarters in Juilfs Park, 8249 Clough Pike.'

"We're staying the course as far as moving forward with the levy," Park Board President Nadine Gelter said. She did not elaborate further on what, if any, new actions the park board members might take.

On Nov. 3, Anderson Township voters will consider a 0.7-mill 15-year levy for the parks. If approved, the issue would raise just over \$12.8 million providing funds to buy the Beech Acres Parenting Center property, renovate the RecPlex and extend the walking trails. The RecPlex is owned by Beech Acres Parenting Center and leased to the park district.

In September 2014 the park district entered discussions with Beech Acres Parenting Center to buy nearly 40 acres of land on Beechmont Avenue. The property is adjacent to the existing Beech Acres Park and includes the RecPlex. Soon discussions expanded to include the Anderson Township Board of Trustees and the Forest Hills Board of Education.

Much of the discussions over the summer focused on a proposal that involved construction of a new Anderson High School on the Beech Acres Parenting Center property and a multi-use development being constructed on the grounds of the existing Anderson High School – all without additional tax dollars. A more recent version of the proposal included the existing RecPlex remaining on the Beech Acres site with \$2 million for renovations.

Official discussions on the proposal broke off in late August due to "insurmountable hurdles," according to a press release issued Aug. 25 by the school district on behalf of the three governmental entities. The release stated that the proposed project was infeasible and stated that the three entities remain committed to building on their partnership.

Despite this announcement, informal discussions about the proposal continued among some members of the community. During the Sept. 8 regular park board meeting, a group of about two dozen residents attended and some encouraged the park board members to re-enter discussions. The proposal was also reportedly discussed at a recent Republican Club meeting.

Among residents interested in seeing discussions continue is Joyce Gundling. She is a member of the unofficial group known as Anderson Township Concerned Citizens. They have a Facebook page.

"We would like to see talks continue regarding the proposed plan because we believe that community matters, facilities matter and given our options, it just seems to make the most sense for the least cents," she said in an email. "We get more, for less and everybody wins."

Gundling said Anderson Township Concerned Citizens met for the first time after the Aug. 11 Park Board meeting at the shelter house at Juilfs Park.

"We spent two hours after that meeting pulling our thoughts and resources together. We left Juilfs Park with a shared contact list and a mission. That mission is their petition which can be found on Change.org.

Read or Share this story: <http://cin.ci/1FcNrJl>