



August 21, 2008

Cell tower might not go on park site

By Steve Kemme
skemme@enquirer.com

ANDERSON TWP. - Strong community opposition to a 170-foot-high cell tower in Johnson Hills Park has caused Arcadia Towers to consider alternate sites nearby.

"There are several property owners in the immediate vicinity of the park that have indicated a willingness to have a tower on their property," said Tom Patterson, chief financial officer of Arcadia Towers in Mariemont. "But Johnson Hills Park is still a viable option."

The company has a contract with the Anderson Township Park Commission to lease a 60-by-60-foot plot in the park on Bridle Road for at least \$20,000, or \$600,000 over the 30-year-term of the contract. The money would be used initially to develop Johnson Hills Park, which opened last year.

But because the park is in a residential zone, the Anderson Township Board of Zoning Appeals must approve the plan before the tower can be built. Arcadia Towers has not yet submitted a plan to the township.

Some residents in the area have objected to the cell tower, saying it would be unsightly, hurt property values, mar the park's appearance and also would violate the deed restrictions placed on the property by Marian Johnson when she sold the land to the park district in 2000 at below market value.

One resident who hired an attorney has threatened to file a lawsuit in an effort to stop the project.

Patterson and park officials dispute the opponents' allegations. They say that with a width of only 2 feet, the cell tower would not be an eyesore.

"It would be very difficult for most people to even see the tower," Patterson said. "It would be a tremendous financial benefit to the park district."

Cell phone reception is bad in the areas along Dry Ridge Road between Bridle Road and Ohio 32, he said.

"There's clearly a need for the cell tower," Patterson said.

Barry Peterson, a cell tower opponent who lives near the park, said he hopes the cell tower wouldn't go in the middle of a residential area.

"Residents don't want to look at it," he said. "I would hope they would go somewhere else."

If Arcadia Towers doesn't build the cell tower in Johnson Hills Park in 16 months, its contract with the park district will expire.

Despite the opposition, the park district still wants a cell tower in Johnson Hills Park because of the revenue it would provide, said Ken Kushner, park district director. The park district has a replacement 1.9-mill levy on the November ballot.

"We're still interested in having a cell tower up there," Kushner said. "It's just up to the company really."
