

Anderson parks open option to vet development plan

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Anderson Township residents have one less issue to consider this election season.

The Anderson Township Board of Park Commissioners decided Tuesday night, Oct. 13, to pull its 0.7-mill levy from the Nov. 3 ballot.

This was as difficult decision for the park board members who invested a great deal of time and energy researching the viability of the levy. It also, at least temporarily, ends a long-standing dispute over the purchase of nearly 40 acres of land from Beech Acres Parenting Center. The park board purchased the property, from the parenting center and has its maintenance and management contract with the center.

Park board members also agreed to convey their purchased property to the Anderson Township Trustees. The trustees offered to buy the parenting center land and hold it while the township and the park board work on a project that would include construction of a new Anderson High School and the renovation of the RecPlex property, and a multi-use development being built on the grounds of the existing Anderson High School.

The township is expected to pay \$5.4 million for the property.

On Oct. 13, representatives from the park district and Anderson Township met with representatives from Beech Acres Parenting Center to discuss the offer to buy. Beech Acres representatives were amenable to the offer, Park Board President Nadine Bartholomew said.

There are a few caveats which include the entire existing purchase agreement be assignable to the township.

Park Board Member Dale Bartholomew said that with its action, the park board is at least guaranteed the property will stay in public hands and will not go to a developer. It will be a school, a school/RecPlex or a park, he said.

Next steps in the process, the Anderson Trustees need to officially act on the purchase and Beech Acres needs to accept the revised deal. Additionally, the Hamilton County Board of Elections will need to take action to officially withdraw the issue.

The Ohio Revised Code explicitly dictates what a board of elections can do if a candidate withdraws from running for office, Hamilton County Board of Elections Director Sherry Poland said. The law does not provide instructions as to what to do if an issue is withdrawn.

The board of elections needs to consult with legal counsel about the withdrawal and hold a board meeting to determine what to do. If the board of elections is scheduled for Nov. 2, a special meeting will be called.

During the park board meeting, several residents expressed frustration about the many unanswered questions surrounding the proposed development. Resident Mary Way provided the park board, Trustee Josh Gerth and others in attendance at the meeting a list of questions she wants answered.

The park district entered talks with Beech Acres Parenting Center over a year ago about purchasing nearly 40 acres of land and RecPlex along Beechmont Avenue. In June the park district entered into an agreement to buy the land/RecPlex pending passage of a 0.7-mill, 15-year parks levy which is on the Nov. 3 ballot.

Early in 2015 the plan that included construction of a new Anderson High School on the Beech Acres project was proposed.

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