

RecPlex future flexible, uncertain

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(Photo: FILE PHOTO)

The future of the Beech Acres Parenting Center property might involve a collaborative effort.

The interested parties have not been identified, but could include the Anderson Township Park District, Anderson Township, the Forest Hills School District or other public or private entities. This was revealed during the April 16 Anderson Township Board of Trustees meeting, where the board had been expected to vote on a proposed bond issue for the parks.

The proposed 1-mill, 20-year bond issue would raise nearly \$24.5 million, enabling the park district to buy from Beech Acres Parenting Center 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. Additionally, if approved, the bond levy would provide enough funds to make upgrades and improvements.

The Anderson Township Board of Park Commissioners is rethinking plans for the property, which was the subject of a recent park district community survey.

Park board members plan to talk to a couple of entities about working together on plans for the Beech Acres property that would reduce costs, Park Board President Dale Bartholomew said.

"There are a couple of entities that came to light since this whole thing came out," Park Board President Dale Bartholomew said. He did not share specifics.

Township trustees support and promote collaboration.

Trustee Josh Gerth said he wants the community to know that he has been working for months on alternatives for Beech Acres. Those alternatives include a renovated recreation building or a brand new recreation building at no cost to tax payers.

In March, officials from the township, parks and schools met in executive session.

"Everyone agreed to explore an option that could be a game-changer for this community," Gerth said.

Trustee Andrew Pappas said he is in favor of protecting and expanding the RecPlex, but wants to explore options that would not increase taxes and could increase the township's tax base.

"There are definitely alternative plans and they range from the unbelievably huge to the smaller in size, and we're still trying to figure out the numbers and the financing for all of them," Gerth said.

Details of these plans will not be shared until there is something concrete.

"I don't want to get people's hopes up or opposition up for one plan because it might be for naught," he said.

The trustees are hopeful that they will soon have something to present to the community.

When they do, it will be with a fully-vetted plan with the full support of others who may be involved be they the park district, school district or another public or private entity, Gerth said.



"I want to make sure we present it all together as one united entity. I'm hoping we will get to that point within the very near future," he said.

Discussion regarding the Beech Acres property is expected to continue at the next meeting of the park board, May 12, Bartholomew said. There will also be a presentation of the survey results. As for the levy, if the board chooses it can rescind the motion to place the 1-mill levy on the ballot and discuss other millage amounts.

"We want to be good stewards of everyone's money and not overspend," he said. The park district has never had a capital campaign and has cared for and improved the parks out of its operating budget that hasn't changed percentage wise in more than 20 years, he said.

The next park board meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 12, at the park district's main office at Juilfs Park, 8249 Clough Pike.

Trustees: Levy not our call

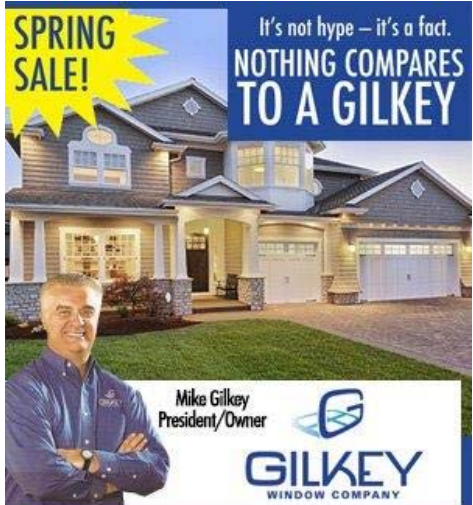
A ruling of the Ohio Attorney General's office stopped an expected vote by the Anderson Township Board of Trustees on a proposed park issue.

Because the park district owns property within the villages of Newtown and Fairfax, territory outside of the unincorporated area of Anderson Township, the trustees are not authorized to consider levy requests by the park district, township Law Director Margaret Comey said.

Comey requested direction from the OAG office. When preparing resolutions for trustee consideration, she said it's routine to question whether the board is authorized to act. The township is investigating when the state law changed that removed its authority over the park district in regards to ballot issues.

This ruling means that the park board does not need permission from the township trustees to place an issue on the ballot. However, the Anderson Township Board of Park Commissioners is rethinking plans for the property which were the subject of a recent park district community survey.

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