



# Petition questions Anderson Twp. fields, accounting

By Lisa Wakeland • lwakeland@communitypress.com • November 19, 2010

Some Anderson Township residents and business owners have accused the Anderson Township Park District of blocking a sanitary sewer project to build a synthetic sports field.

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A petition signed by close to 30 people alleges the Park District obstructed "a vital sewer project to build a \$2 million synthetic peewee football field" at Riverside Park that the petition calls "an absurd waste of taxpayer money."

Mark Schmidt, owner of Blue Chip Pavement Maintenance, Inc. on Mt. Carmel Road, has said the Park District uses faulty accounting methods to calculate the cost of large projects such as the synthetic fields by omitting the labor costs of its employees.

The dirt and earth work for the all-weather synthetic fields, new trail and parking lot was completed by Park District employees and totals approximately \$93,000, Executive Director Ken Kushner said.

"We account for that but ... it doesn't come out of (the \$1.65 million) bond, it comes out of the regular budget," he said.

"We couldn't afford that project with just all contractors."

Unlike a business, Kushner added, the Park District can buy cheaper equipment from state bids and does not write off that equipment for tax purposes.

The cost for the parking lot, trail and fields was slightly more than \$2 million, Kushner said. The permeable paver parking lot was partially funded by a grant from the Ohio Environment Protection Agency.

Park Commissioner Duffy Beischel suggested the Park District create an analysis to compare the internal and external costs of completing large projects.

"We hope it will show the public that we are actually saving money when we do these projects versus what it could cost (with contractors)," said Park Commissioner Dale Bartholomew.

"We have better control over (a project) when we're the general contractor."

Though frustration with the conflict between the synthetic fields and the sewer line construction was the impetus for the petition drive, led by Schmidt, the document asks for more public input and suggests surveys to determine general resident support for large projects, such as the synthetic fields.

Assistant Director Emily Armstrong said the Park District surveyed athletic organizations that use the fields to determine if there was a desire for the synthetic field and those surveys showed the demand existed.

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