

Murrysville Star

Future of PV Park land debated

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Staff Writer
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The future of Pleasant Valley Park may be determined by sewer construction and whether part of the land could be sold for residential development.

Murrysville council tackled the question of whether to sell the 288-acre park at its meeting last week after the issue was reintroduced at a council-staff retreat. The property was appraised at \$750,000 in 2003.

In 2004, sale was recommended but officials held off after residents spoke out against selling the land.

Councilwoman Nancy Kacin said there are no interested buyers for the property at this time.

She said the park was originally for active playing fields but is not being used for that purpose. She said the access road onto Pleasant Valley Road is dangerous.

"That park is great for trails and hiking," says Robert Brooks, councilman. "I don't really see home sites in that park."

But he added that homes could be developed along Pleasant Valley Road if a proposed sewer line is finally constructed.

Councilman Jack Bankoske said the municipal finance committee had recommended selling the park and that the recreation department agreed. Sale of the property would generate money that could be used with matching grant funds to tackle phase two of the Murrysville Community Park development, which could provide more active playing fields.

Bankoske asked if council has lost the vision to create neighborhood parks. Kacin said that neighborhoods don't want the traffic from organized sports in local parks.

Michele Clarke, recreation director, drove to the meeting from home after seeing the discussion televised on the cable access channel. She said she liked Brooks' idea for selling only part of the property.

"We're going to need more areas for active recreation in 10 or 20 years," Clarke said.

Clarke suggested not rushing into a decision but giving her until June to present plans for Murrysville Community Park.

"The two things do blend together," she said, noting that more development south of Route 22 indicates the possible need for a park in that area in years to come.

Council president Theo Van de Venne questioned whether the proposed sewer is "pie in the sky" or real. He said if it is one or two years away, council would regret selling the property now when it could make more on the sale once the area is sewered.

Money from the sale of Pleasant Valley Park could be used for construction of new fields at Murrysville Community Park. The money would be required to be used for a conservation-type municipal property.

Several residents spoke in favor of the municipality keeping the park.

"We need a balance between residential growth and open space," said Lisa Highland, a resident.

Hank Kendall, a resident, said the demand for practice fields is great, but they have been lost in school expansions.

"Not every child is interested in organized sports," said Shirley Turnage, a resident, adding that maintenance of Pleasant Valley would cost less than the community park.

Another resident pointed out residential development would probably cost more in municipal and school services than the park does.