

Pleasant Valley options weighed

By Tom Yerace
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A compromise plan has been floated for the Pleasant Valley Park property in Murrysville.

Council renewed discussions Wednesday night on whether to sell the property and that prospect brought out about a half-dozen residents opposed to it.

They warned council that selling the land for development will only put more strain on providing municipal services rather than yield increased tax revenues. Also, they called for more green space and warned that another property of the same size likely will not be available for park development.

"To me, Pleasant Valley Park is a good investment in Murrysville's future," resident Shirley Turnage said.

Planning for the undeveloped park property along Pleasant Valley Road has dogged council for at least two years. Murrysville officials purchased the land only to realize later that its rough topography would limit the development of recreation facilities such as ball fields.

The municipality subsequently bought a separate property that became Murrysville Community Park, but money has been lacking to develop it at a faster pace.

Councilwoman Nancy Kacin, who was outspoken in advocating the sale of the park property when she ran for council last year, again seemed to push that as the best alternative.

"It's just a matter of are we getting our money's worth out of that land as a community?" Kacin said.

But Councilman Bob Brooks proposed a compromise alternative: sell off that part of the property fronting Pleasant Valley Road for home sites, with the exception of a couple of park accesses, and keep the remainder of the property.

"Basically then, you are saving three-fourths of the site," Brooks said. "That park is great for trails and for hiking."

"I think Bob is onto something here," Councilman Jack Bankoske said. "We can look at selling part of it and maybe retaining some of it, perhaps for the (Westmoreland) conservancy."

Kacin said council must determine if that is a viable alternative and if the property can fulfill some of Murrysville's future recreation needs. Council President Theo Van De Venne said council needs to find out if the Franklin Township Municipal Sanitary Authority is serious about putting a sewer line along Pleasant Valley Road that will make the property more conducive to development.

Also, he said what the second-phase plan for Murrysville Community Park will fulfill for recreation, and where the Pleasant Valley property can fit into it, must be considered.

Council agreed to wait for that information before weighing any move to sell the park. Recreation Director Michele Clark said the second-phase study should be ready sometime in June.

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