

MIDDLETOWN

Full-court press comes to a halt

A proposed full basketball court at a township park in Cobalt Ridge has created divisions among residents.

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Hoop lovers were already thinking about outlet passes, fast breaks and end-to-end action when the Middletown supervisors called timeout.

The board has put construction of a full basketball court in the township's Cobalt Ridge section on hold until concerns from neighbors can be addressed. Township Parks and Recreation director Debby Lamanna said she and other officials will meet Tuesday night with residents on both sides of the issue. Any proposed solution coming out of that meeting would have to be approved by the supervisors, she said.

A \$59,990 contract for construction of the court had been awarded to K.E. Seifert Inc. of Langhorne, but some neighbors became alarmed when they saw Seifert workers staking out the dimensions in preparation for construction, Lamanna said.

Among the concerns expressed to her, she said, is that the court is located too close to a playground where little children play. She said the location of the court was based partly on feedback from nearby residents but that no official notification was made to all residents within a certain distance of the court. One of the things coming out of the basketball court issue will be a policy for notification to residents within a certain distance of proposed projects on township property, Lamanna said.

That's already done with plans for projects on private land, she added.

"To not be notified and have a chance to speak on things like this ahead of time is not fair," said resident Laura Bell, one of those concerned about the full basketball court.

The court is planned for the township's Cobalt Ridge Green Belt Park on Cobalt Cross Road. It's supposed to replace a half-court and will be located farther away from houses to minimize complaints about noise, Lamanna said.

Bell said she is also concerned about construction of another hard pavement facility, especially a full court, within the green belt.

"People play Frisbee in that area and have picnics," she said. "That green belt is absolutely precious to us."

Some residents are also worried that players on the full court could use foul language or otherwise intimidate children on the nearby playground, Lamanna said.

Matt Vivian, a nearby resident and basketball player, doesn't think that will be the case.

"I think players on that court close to kids will make an effort to control their language," he said.

"Personally, I would certainly discourage bad language. A full court is definitely something I would like to see there. Half-court just isn't the same. You can't play five on five, and I'm always hearing people talk about how they would love a full court there so they didn't have to walk over to Quincy Hollow."

The full court in Quincy Hollow is the only one left in the Levittown part of Middletown, said Lamanna. The full court in Cobalt Ridge was reduced to a half court several years ago because of complaints from neighbors about noise and other issues, and the same thing happened to a full court in Upper Orchard, she said.

The township has five full basketball courts in the Langhorne part of Middletown, said Lamanna.

She said the township parks and recreation advisory board has recommended moving ahead with the Cobalt Ridge full basketball court and addressing problems if they arise.

Lamanna said she probably will issue her own recommendation after Tuesday night's

meeting.