

MIDDLETOWN

Search goes on for place to build court

All 10 residents who showed up at a recent meeting about a proposed full basketball court at a township park in the Forsythia Gate section objected to the idea.

Editor's note: An incomplete version of this story ran in Monday's newspaper.

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In their efforts to fill the basketball void in the Levittown part of Middletown, the township supervisors and recreation officials might have to go back to the chalkboard.

All 10 residents who showed up at a recent meeting about a proposed full basketball court at a township park in the Forsythia Gate section objected to the idea, said Parks and Recreation Director Debby Lamanna. This came after the township canceled a contract for a full court in the Cobalt Ridge section because of objections from neighbors about lack of parking, the nearness of the proposed court to a playground for small children, and other issues.

Middletown is split into two sections, those residents with a Levittown mailing address and those with a Langhorne address, said Lamanna. There are five full basketball courts in the Langhorne part of the township and only one, in Quincy Hollow, in Levittown, she said.

"People who like basketball over here in Levittown are being shortchanged," said Supervisor Chairman Chuck Thompson.

On the other hand, it would be hard to pursue a full court at the Forsythia Gate park, called Forsythia Crossing, given the opposition from nearby residents, he said.

"I had thought Forsythia Crossing was an ideal place because the court would have been well away from houses and that park already has parking," Thompson said. "Probably the best thing to do now is have Debby (Lamanna) and our parks and recreation advisory board take another look at this and come up with some more recommendations."

Tom Piacentino, a former township planning commission member and one resident who objected to a basketball court at Forsythia Crossing, said there isn't enough parking there.

"If you had 10 basketball players go there, six or eight would drive and that's six or eight fewer spaces for people who come to use things that were there when the park was built," said Piacentino. "A basketball court would also draw more traffic into our section streets, and I think it would also make the park a hangout for older kids after dark."

There were no plans to light the court at Forsythia Crossing, Lamanna said.

Piacentino said a better location for the outdoor court would be the township-owned community center property on Trenton Road. The building there houses the township seniors association and some other programs.

"You could get there on a main road without having to go through residential streets," he said.

"There are pros and cons to any location we could pick," responded Lamanna.

Matt Vivian, an avid basketball player who still plays on the Quincy Hollow Court despite recently moving from Middletown to Bristol Township, said more full courts are needed.

"The one they were going to put into Cobalt Ridge would have been great but, if not there, then somewhere in Levittown," Vivian said. "I'm pretty much puzzled why so many adults are against a place for kids to go play basketball. Personally, I think a lot of neighbors overreact. I think (Middletown) officials know what the right thing is but they don't want to deal with the opposition so they back down every time. I wish they would do what is right instead of what is easy."