

October 25, 2023

Anderson Park District
Board of Park Commissioners
6915 Beechmont Avenue
Anderson Township, OH 45230

Dear Commissioners:

The Anderson Township Economic Development Committee (EDC) is comprised of volunteer citizens committed to protecting and preserving the economic health and viability of our community. The EDC's longstanding objective is to collaborate with the Township and all our community partners to weigh in on the most advantageous use for pivotal properties in Anderson Township. Investment in the community over the past decade is a testament to those efforts.

In the past, the Committee has taken a collective stance on issues when they involve land designated as "key sites" in the Township's Comprehensive Plan. We find it imperative to inform the community that **we do not support the Anderson Park District's (APD) recent acquisition of the Beech Acres Parenting Center (BAPC) property**. The Park District's actions do not align with the Township's best interest and have economic ramifications that threaten to impede progress made over the past decade for the reasons stated below:

- The property was appraised at \$3.6M and the APD paid \$6.3M. The purchase was financed, utilizing public funds through inside millage.
 - We believe these funds, totaling over \$500,000/year, should have been used for maintenance and enhancements to **current** parks and to offset the forthcoming improvement levy.
 - The APD's decision to purchase the property was based on a 2015 survey, **before** the acquisition and renovation of the Anderson RecPlex and surrounding 6-acres. This decision did not utilize a new survey/public outreach, or community vote.
- According to the 2022 Anderson Township Comprehensive Plan, this 17acre plot of land is designated as "Transitional Residence," a much-in demand and lacking use in Anderson, and one where few locations exist for the addition of new housing of this type.
 - APD representatives were on this committee (the APD has been on each and every such committee since the first Plan in 2005), along with more than 50 community members from diverse backgrounds, and input was received from more than 1,000 persons. The APD, nor its representatives, objected to this suggested land use.
 - **The BAPC property was not suggested for "high-density" development.** Township staff members also made this land use designation clear to leadership at the BAPC and their real estate broker, as well as private entities seeking to purchase the property. This included the two developers who had signed letters of intent/offers with the BAPC and were seeking to construct high density housing.
 - The APD reported that the \$6.3M offer was established due to the "market rate set by multiple bidders". However, this was based on high density housing proposals that were **not** supported by the Township's Comprehensive Plan or staff. Hence, those bids did not result in purchase contracts with developers.

- The acquisition and development of the BAPC property does not harmonize with the community's financial capacity.
 - **The passage of Issue 18, the APD Park Improvement levy on the November 7, 2023, ballot, will increase property taxes by \$35 per \$100,000 of value.** The average home value in Anderson Township is approaching \$400,000, which means the property taxes increase \$140 annually. During a time when costs are rising for everyone, public funding should be used to address needs, not wants.
 - Further, the community has experienced minimal population growth over the past 20 years, despite the APD introducing several new or expanded parks, including the existing Beech Acres Park. These have entailed funds to develop and maintain, and in some cases acquire these areas.
- Despite a previous precedent for collaboration and the fact that the APD has a representative on the EDC, we understand the APD did not engage in meaningful collaboration with Anderson Township or the Forest Hills School District (FHSD) prior to these financial decisions to explore partnership opportunities. Historically, such collaboration has been the linchpin in ensuring the best outcomes for our exceptional community and taxpayers.
 - The most recent, and perhaps relevant, example of this was several years ago when the township and school district shared projected funds from **new development** to help the Park District purchase and renovate the **existing** Beech Acres (now Anderson) RecPlex. This was done at **no** additional cost to taxpayers thanks to creative and collaborative use of TIF dollars from the neighboring Anthology at Anderson development.
 - The purchase of the BAPC property occurred without the involvement of community partners, including but not limited to Anderson Township or FHSD, and little knowledge of the taxpayers until it was promoted after it transferred.
- We believe our parks are invaluable to the health and enjoyment of our community and residents. However, the focus in this unstable economic environment should be on preservation and maintenance, not new land acquisitions and development.

The Anderson Township Economic Development Committee is **opposed to the APD's acquisition of the BAPC property** as we want to see a responsible tax spending strategy. We also encourage the APD Commissioners to restore collaborative relationships with the Township when determining the future use of land with a continued emphasis on maximizing the benefit for all members of the Anderson Township community.

Sincerely,



Jeff Rosa
Chairman, on behalf of the Anderson Township Economic Development Committee