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Fifty Cents

Public opposition axes timbering plan

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One person admitted never having gone to White's Woods but wanted to save the trees just the same. Another proposed bulldozing the whole tract.

Officials tallied 2,478 surveys returned by registered voters in White Township, and the numbers spoke for themselves. A full 1,527, about 62 percent, voted against a selective cut in the 250 acres just north of Indiana Borough.

As a result, the White Township supervisors agreed unanimously Wednesday not to timber the area, based on a motion proposed by Ford Buterbaugh, road superintendent.

"Due to the overwhelming response, I think we should support the survey," he said to applause. "Provided we should all get a shirt."

About 60 people filled the meeting room of the township building, many

What township residents said in poll

Details on the survey received by the White Township supervisors:

◆ 6,143 surveys were sent out; 2,478 were tabulated.

◆ 39 percent of those who responded claimed to visit the park less than six times per year, and 38 percent said they never went to White's Woods. Nine percent claimed to use it once a week or more, and 15 percent

said they went once a month.

◆ 40 percent voted to leave White's Woods as it is, with another 40 percent opting for passive recreational activities such as picnic shelters, nature study exhibits and rest rooms. Six percent wanted active facilities — ballfields, playgrounds — similar to those in other township parks. One percent wanted only basic additions such as parking.

◆ 62 percent opposed timbering, 31 percent were for it and 7 percent had no opinion.

◆ Of the facilities people would most like to see included in White's Woods, 667 listed hiking trails, 383 wanted it to remain as is and 271 asked for a picnic area and pavilions.

On a similar question, 314 wanted baseball fields, and 219 asked for biking trails.

standing at the sides and spilling into the entry hall, with about 40 more outside. Most wore green T-shirts bearing the logo "Friends of White's Woods." The group organized earlier this year to prevent

officials from timbering the park.

"I do appreciate the vote," said John Coffman, president of Friends, "even though it invalidated 17 weeks of work. I'm very proud of our political system. Too often today we

can't influence anybody."

He said citizens in Columbiana, an Ohio town with fewer than 5,000 residents, raised \$100,000 in less than a year to build a park there. He said his group contacted them to find out

how they did it.

"If you or the rec commission are interested, perhaps we can do something on the playground issue," Coffman said.

The supervisors proposed last December to timber White's Woods to raise money for renovations to Getty Heights Park near Indiana. They needed about \$100,000 for the project, provided they received a \$70,000 grant.

Buterbaugh said after the meeting that supervisors have no idea how to get those funds now that timbering is out of the picture.

"Maybe these people can get some fund-raising going," he said.

He said he proposed abandoning the plan to timber White's Woods because the survey results were more lopsided than he expected. He said there may be other development in the park.

"It's still our intention to put a pavilion up there, a parking area and a decent roadway," Buterbaugh said. "We have to make it accessible to the handicapped."