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Murrysville officials work to shape interest in trails

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Murrysville Council will continue to await recommendations from its planning commission and administration in regards to a plan to create a network of trails in the municipality.

"I think there are some decisions that need to be made as to how we move forward with this," Chief Administrator Jim Morrison said. "The plan is well-thought through and well-presented."

The group discussed the trail plan during its regular meeting last night and what it would take to keep the plan in the forefront as a working document. The municipality's trail committee presented the plan to council during its April 4 meeting that suggested connecting neighborhoods with recreational opportunities and appointing an employee to implement the panel's recommendations.

Chief Administrator Jim Morrison said council should examine the future relationship with the Murrysville Trail Alliance, noting that "the maintenance responsibility will not be able to fall to the Public Works Department."

Morrison said he hopes to present the trail plan to a consultant hired to complete the municipality's comprehensive plan this year.

"I think it's an evolving process," he said.

Some council members asked how to keep the trail plan momentum going, and Morrison responded that as recommendations come forward, council will be asked to make decisions.

"There's no intention to let this go stale," he said.

The plan identifies the need for hiking trails as well as upgrading

biking routes.

A few council members lauded the concept of the plan while noting the more laborious process of examining the impact of a trail system to ordinances and the budget.

"The map is visionary, rather than saying we're going to have a trail here," said Council President Joan Kearns, adding that it is subject to change.

It could be difficult maintaining a volunteer force to upkeep the trail, Councilman David Perry said.

In other trail-related business, council approved naming a trail in Bear Hollow Park for deceased volunteer Ed Straub. Chairwoman of the Murrysville Trail Alliance Betsy Aiken said at council's April 4 meeting that Straub was a strong trail supporter.

"He was instrumental in developing a trail plan" in the 1980s and another one presented to council this month, Aiken said. "Throughout his last few decades ... he worked very assiduously for the municipality. He built and maintained various hiking trails in the municipality."

Straub was a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission, helped conserve the municipality's Pleasant Valley Park and was a founding member of the trail alliance, she said.

Council also approved the building of two new trails in Pleasant Valley Park as well as names for the paths after some consideration. The paths will be named Cheeky Chipmunk Trail and Squirrely Edge Trail.

In approving the names, council rejected a recommendation from the parks commission which recommended the trails be named after animals without any adjectives, said Aiken, a member of the commission.

"Now trails (in the park) are named after trees," she said. "They were really looking for continuity with what existed in the park."

Perry said he couldn't vote against the names because the builders

"like it, they're the ones building it."