

N. Phila residents object to bike path right-of-way

By JOE MIZER

Residents who oppose turning the Penn Central Railroad property in New Philadelphia into a bicycle path were told by city councilmen Monday night that no decisions have been made and "all options are still open."

Several residents from 3rd and 4th st. NW, whose properties adjoin the railroad property, voiced opposition to a bicycle path, stating that they already have enough problems with unauthorized persons, mostly motorcyclists, riding in the area.

Mrs. Thomas McCulloch of 427 4th st. NW, the group spokeswoman, said her main concern is for her husband who is bedfast. She said motorcycles are driven through the railroad right-of-way, onto property she and her husband lease from the railroad and onto their own property.

If the right-of-way were opened to bicycles, "it will bring children from all over and we certainly wouldn't want that," said Mrs. McCulloch. She and other residents emphasized that they were not opposed to children, but with the litter, noise, etc. that often accompany larger numbers.

Petitions containing approximately 50 signatures were presented to council in opposition to the bicycle path. The petitions were circulated by Mrs. Roland Mason of 361 3rd st. NW and Mrs. Jay Peterson of 365 3rd st. NW.

Mrs. Peterson said the residents of the area feel they should have the first chance at leasing or buying the property.

Councilman Ed Streb, chairman of the contact committee, pointed out the three options he felt the city had — do nothing, lease the property and make a bicycle path or let the property owners purchase the right-of-way adjoining their properties.

IF THE CITY leased the property and made a bicycle path the city would then have control, including law enforcement, of the use of that property, Streb said. If the city does nothing, law enforcement officers have no jurisdiction over vehicular use of the right-of-way, motorcyclists would have a wider pathway on which to travel and residents would have no recourse, he said.

As for the residents purchasing ad-

joining right-of-way, Streb said he felt it would be too expensive for most. City Solicitor Les Early said any sale of the right-of-way from the bankrupt company would have to be made through a bankruptcy trustee and would be "a long drawn out process."

Discussions about making the railroad right-of-way a bicycle trail began after it was announced that the Luntz Corp. of Canton was to tear up the rails and railroad ties on a portion which was no longer used. That portion extends from Beaver av. NE to 4th st. NW.

Streb told those opposing the bicycle path his reason for suggesting the right-of-way be made into one at the April 26 meeting was, "We thought that by trying to do something we would be helping you!" He told the residents other suggestions would be welcome.

PAUL SENSIBAUGH, service director/engineer, who had been asked by council to contact the railroad to learn if the property could be leased or purchased, said he was told by county officials that because of a high amount of

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back taxes owed by Penn Central, "the land will have to go through the county first." He said he felt the county would want to get all of the money possible out of the property before it could be sold or leased.

In addition, Sensibaugh reported that the Luntz Corp. has agreed to tear up track and ties crossing 4th st. NW, in exchange for the city paving that portion of roadway. He said the intersection was not included in the Luntz contract with the railroad and said the company could have stopped short of crossing 4th st.

Even though the company "feels it has gotten a bad shake" from the city by having to pave the other streets crossed, it is doing the paving, Sensibaugh said. In exchange for the paving, the city is hauling and disposing of the railroad ties.

Sensibaugh said he estimates the paving of 4th st. will cost the city about \$700, but figures that most of the cost can be recovered through the sale of the used railroad ties at \$2.50 each. He said the city took in \$250 Monday on tie sales.