



Aston Valley vows to sue Penn-Delco

■ Baseball league put in hours of time and about \$300,000 to fix up Jim Buggy Field and now school district aims to end lease agreement.

By **DAN RUSSO**

Times Correspondent

ASTON — Penn-Delco School Board's decision to terminate a lease agreement with the Aston Valley Baseball League for the use of a popular field had several dozen impassioned parents and league officials crying foul at a packed meeting Tuesday night.

In a 5-1 vote, the board resolved to end a 50-year lease that allows the league "preferential use" of Jim Buggy Field. The resolution would ax the agreement as of July 31. It cites the board's desire to ensure that all community groups have "equitable right to use the school district's fields."

"The board is not kicking Aston Valley Baseball off Buggy field," said school board President Anthony Ruggieri. "We just do not want to be entered into a lease agreement. They're going to have the same right to use the field they always had."

The league and its volunteers obtained permission to renovate the land now known as Buggy Field. In November 2000, the league signed the lease agreement and has provided labor and money to create

and maintain the field. It currently shares the facility with Penn-Delco School District teams. The Aston Valley Baseball League currently includes about 400 players from childhood through age 18.

Board member Michael McLaughlin cast the lone dissenting vote.

"I believe you guys have a different situation than the other teams," McLaughlin said to league officials after this vote. "You built it."

"I'm very disappointed in the board's decision," said Aston Valley Baseball League Treasurer Fran Miles. "Nobody's ever been denied use of that field."

Ruggieri said the board took action after a recommendation of board Solicitor Michael Levin. Ending the lease would ensure the district has more control of facilities, according to officials. Levin said the board's facilities-use policy requires equal access to district facilities.

"We did not take anything away from the kids of Penn-Delco and Aston Valley Baseball," said board Vice President Kim Robinson.

League Vice President Joe Hart said the organization would take court action to protest the lease being broken and also to recoup almost \$300,000 in labor and donations spent on the field by volunteers and league members.

"We'll continue taking care of the field through the end of the season, then it's in limbo," said Hart.