

News

Talbot Y joins Oxford pool push

By KELLEY L. ALLEN Staff Writer

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OXFORD Oxford residents could get a small YMCA satellite facility with a pool, the vice president of the Oxford Pool Committee announced Tuesday night.

The facility could go on town-owned land at the end of East Pier Street and would include a site plan change from what the pool committee proposed. Robbie Gill, president of the YMCA, said that organization would lease the land from the town and would run the facility with input from an advisory board of community members.

About 400 Oxford residents belong to the nonprofit, Christian organization, Gill said. When pool committee members approached him in December about a collaboration, Gill embraced the idea.

He also pitched the proposal to the YMCA board, which passed it in January.

Lisa Johnson, pool committee vice president and acting president, said she hoped to have a site concept plan within the next couple of months. The changes could include a bigger footprint, among other things.

Without the site plan, Johnson and Gill do not have cost estimates nor a timeline for the project. Before the collaboration, pool committee President Danny Cole estimated the project at about a half million dollars.

At that time, Cole said the project could take about two years to complete and he hoped to have land secured by the end of the summer.

But whatever those costs are, they will not affect the town or its residents. Gill said the YMCA will work with its volunteers and will use its resources to fund the facility.

After five years of working to get a pool to Oxford, the Pier Street site is the fourth place the committee considered for the project. The previous sites did not work for various reasons, including stormwater management issues.

Joseph Sean Callahan of Lane Engineering LLC said the current site works from an engineering standpoint.

Some committee members wanted an endorsement Tuesday from the commissioners, who did not indicate approval nor disapproval for the proposal. But a few months ago, before the YMCA collaboration, Cole met with the commissioners about the project and said he had their unanimous consent.

At Tuesday's meeting, the commissioners did ask some questions about parking, site design, and exclusivity.

Gill said the facility would not be exclusive to Oxford residents. He also said the YMCA is looking to build a facility in the Bay Hundred area, possibly in St. Michaels, within the next five years.

Town Council President Peter Dunbar asked Gill and Johnson to bring a proposal back to the council.



PHOTOS BY KELLEY L. ALLEN YMCA President Robbie Gill tells the Oxford Town Council on Tuesday night that a satellite Y facility would benefit the town and its residents.

Commissioner Tim Kearns said he wanted to see how the changes could affect the town's plans for the rest of the site, if and when that happens.

Dunbar said the council is open to comments and opinions about the project from the town's residents.

The pool committee formed in 2005, and in 2006, 157 Oxford residents voted for the town to make surplus land available for the project. Since then, lack of a site has kept the project from moving forward.

Cole said he envisioned a pool as a way to pull Oxford together as a community. Gill said he sees a facility as an opportunity and as a benefit to residents.

"It's taken a lot of due diligence," Cole said. "But it's been worth it to get the right site."

Information about the pool committee is available at www.oxfordpool.org. The site plan on the site does not reflect changes for the proposed YMCA facility.

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