



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Grafton Parks & Recreation
Gap in Funding for the Outdoor Pool --
Citizens Question if a Year-Round Facility is a better Option

Grafton, ND December 23rd, 2024 – Grafton Parks & Recreation’s gap in funding for the outdoor pool project has citizens and leaders questioning – is it time to focus on a more comprehensive health & fitness center where there are more partners, activities, and revenue available to help fund the pool and increased amenities.

Bill Dahl, Executive Director (GPR) says “Kristi Wilfahrt, a nonprofit project and fund development consultant, was hired to assess the community’s capacity to raise the estimated \$5 million gap between the ¼ cent sales tax ordinance approved in July 2024 for 20 years, garnering about \$2.8 million in support, and the actual cost of a new outdoor pool. Dahl estimated the cost of a new outdoor pool to be \$7-8 million for a standard outdoor pool with zero-depth entry, some play features, and a new pool house. “This is a pretty significant gap and the concern”, says Wilfahrt, “are the people who live here and use the pool able and willing to step up and contribute to this extent for a facility open 9-10 weeks a year.” Wilfahrt interviewed more than 45 stakeholders over the last few months and reports the conversation shifted early on in the interview process, whereas stakeholders suggested it was time Grafton consider a year-round aquatic, health & fitness center.

Wilfahrt’s recommendations shared on December 18, 2024, to the committee of Grafton Parks & Recreation include hiring **IBIS Enterprises**, an expert in healthcare/wellness/fitness/recreation, Business Planning & Project Development and Public-Private Community Partnerships, to complete the financial planning and private public partnerships. Wilfahrt states “there are many potential community partnerships to explore that have expressed interest in participating at some level. IBIS will sort that out and determine to what extent a year-round health & fitness center is possible.”

Committee members weighed in on their support for hiring IBIS Enterprises. Darren Albrecht, Superintendent of Grafton Public Schools shared he’s “in favor of hiring IBIS Enterprises as the Grafton High School expansion project would not have been possible without a plan from a professional. The plan set the stage for us to seek funding for the project.”

Vonda Collette explained that it is important to have a study done by a neutral party with the right skillset. IBIS has the ability to produce this and has not had a facility that hasn't made money in their thirty years of experience. The plan needs to be right for Grafton. IBIS (Donna Jarmusz) can determine what that is.

The committee voted unanimously to recommend Grafton Parks & Recreation move forward by hiring IBIS Enterprises for \$75,000. Funding for IBIS planning is being raised separately from the pool fund.

Wilfahrt also recommends that a side-by-side analysis be completed for three options:

Option A: a year-round facility with more amenities

Option B: an outdoor facility only

Option C: a "fix" of the current outdoor pool, if possible.

Stakeholders want to understand the real options. A business /operation plan, as well as a capital funding and deferred maintenance plan for each option.

ABOUT GRAFTON PARKS & RECREATION and GPR FOUNDATION

The mission of Grafton Parks & Recreation | Foundation is to improve the quality of life in Grafton, ND by improving the quality of Grafton Parks & Recreation's parks, facilities, and program equipment. Grafton Parks & Recreation Foundation is a 501(c)(3) Charitable Organization.

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If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Grafton Parks and Recreation at 701-352-1842 or email at gpr@graftonparks.com