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**For Immediate Release**

**November 30, 2015**

**Parks, County, and Y Boards Authorize Pool Ops Agreement:  
Easling Pool to Reopen in January 2016**

**Traverse City** – Following nearly eight months of meetings and negotiations between Grand Traverse Bay YMCA and Grand Traverse County Parks and Recreation, on Tuesday, November 24, County Commissioners gave their final approval of Parks and Recreation’s request to enter into an agreement with the Y to take over Easling Pool operations at the county’s Civic Center Park in early January 2016, following a vote of approval by the Y’s Board of Directors on November 20.

“The decision about the future of the pool has loomed long and weighed heavy on our Parks and Recreation Commission, the County Commissioners, our Parks staff, and the community,” said Parks Director Kristine Erickson, “but the positive outcome has been worth the hard work and the wait.” According to Erickson, the intent of a County Parks and Recreation-YMCA collaboration is to put the pool on a more sustainable path, and increase recreational services and opportunities at the county’s Civic Center Park and some of its other parks.

For many years, commissioners have discussed closing Easling Pool each fall, during budget season. “That’s why,” said Erickson, “this absolutely is the right time for a change in pool management and a different way of doing business for the County. There are YMCA-operated pools all over the nation, and managing pools is the Grand Traverse Bay Y CEO’s expertise, so let the pool expert run the pool.”

Y CEO Jay Buckmaster sees the possibilities of the partnership going beyond the pool. “County Parks has properties with unique facilities that can be used for Y-programmed recreation, camps, and events,” he said, “and our collaboration could create additional revenues from those properties for County Parks.” Proposed management agreement terms between Parks and Recreation and the Y include use of the meeting room in the Civic Center building for a new Y fitness center, and use of the Civic Center multi-purpose field for some Y recreational programming. “The ability to use these facilities,” said Buckmaster, “will help the Y on the east side of town attract and build membership.”

Building membership, Erickson explained, is the key to the partnership continuing beyond 2016. “County Commissioners have given the Y and County Parks one year – 2016 – to make a go of this deal,” she said.

Proposed management agreement terms also include some measurable results on the part of the Y, which will take over utility payments from the County once there are 400 memberships at the Civic Center. At 700 memberships, no management fee would be paid by the County to the Y. A \$50,000

management fee to support operations will be paid by Parks to the Y for 2016. Both Buckmaster and Erickson say they are optimistic that the goals of 400 and 700 memberships will quickly be reached.

Proposed monthly membership rates for the Y at the Civic Center are:

Youth: \$19  
Adult: \$39  
Senior: \$29  
Adult Couple: \$45  
Senior Couple: \$35  
Family: \$50

“We want to keep the rates close to what they were when Parks and Recreation operated the pool,” said Buckmaster, “just like we want to continue to serve the same types of users.” Buckmaster assured that usership by and programs for groups such as Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District, the High School Swim Team, Traverse City Area Public Schools freshmen, the U.S. Coast Guard, will continue at Easling Pool under Y management. “Keeping the pool open allows for these groups to continue to be served, because the Y simply could not accommodate all of them.” Buckmaster said that swim lessons will be offered at Easling Pool, too, starting in spring.

When Easling Pool opens under Y management in January, proposed hours of operation are:

Monday through Friday, 5:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., with user groups scheduled between 1 and 4 p.m.  
Saturday, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Sunday, 12 to 4 p.m.

The county continues to own Easling Pool as an asset, and will maintain the facility. “It’s similar to our agreement with I.C.E.,” explained Erickson. “They rent Howe Arena from us for seven months, and take care of everything except building maintenance.” Erickson said she is looking forward to the Y managing the pool, “so that the Parks Department can focus on finding funding through grants for aging pool mechanical equipment, completing projects in our nine parks, and promoting our properties properly so that they can be discovered, used, and enjoyed more.” Erickson also looks forward to the cobranding and promotional opportunities the Y partnership will bring. “Together, we can do much more to encourage and boost water safety and wellness among our community members, and increase recreational opportunities in our beautiful county,” said Erickson. “That’s what parks and recreation is all about.”

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