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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Community to Vote on New Civic Center Playground Designs and Name the Playground

Traverse City, Grand Traverse County – During the next week, community members will have a chance to vote on three proposed designs for and name a new playground at the Grand Traverse County Civic Center. “We’ve waited a long time to get to this point, and we are thrilled,” said Kristine Erickson, Director of Grand Traverse County Parks and Recreation.

The former playground at Civic Center Park was closed in fall 2014 by Parks and Recreation Commissioners after much of the structure was declared unsafe by an independent playground safety inspector, and after soil samples indicated elevated arsenic levels in the ground covering. “It would have been too costly to bring the structure up to current playground safety standards,” said Erickson, “so our commission voted to have its Business Development Team research costs and fundraising options for a new playground.”

It has been nearly a year since the former, aging play structure was removed, said Erickson, “and it was very difficult, especially since Kids Kove was built with a labor of love by nearly 2,000 volunteers.” Erickson said the community needed some time to heal and the commission and department needed time to select a new location and research options. “We provided playground vendors with a list of wants, needs, and wishes, based on the results of an on-line community survey earlier this year, and the designs we’ve received have exceeded our expectations.”

Through March 23, Parks and Recreation seeks additional input from the community via an on-line survey on Facebook, featuring three playground designs from which to choose. “We also want help naming the new playground,” said Erickson, “and the community can do that on Facebook, too.”

The overall project cost is \$150,000, including \$20,000 set aside for future maintenance costs. “It is important to point out,” said the director, “that this project will not be funded by taxpayers’ dollars.” Erickson explained that Parks and Recreation already has \$52,000 earmarked for construction, composed of \$12,000 in wellness grants from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, and a \$40,000 donation from Meredith and Erik Falconer of Traverse City.

The balance of \$98,000 will be sought through on-line donations with help from a municipal “grant-funding” organization, “Patronicity”. Patronicity describes itself as a civic crowdfunding platform for municipalities, with a mission to “bring together local citizens and sponsors to support great initiatives in their communities.” Erickson explained that, once \$50,000 has been donated by community members, Patronicity will match those funds with \$50,000. On-line fundraising is expected to begin in late April.

“These are exciting times in Parks and Recreation and for our community,” said Erickson, “and I am privileged to be part of such a meaningful project. This playground is something we want to give to our community to continue enhancing the joyful spirit and quality experiences in our parks, especially Traverse City’s ‘Central Park,’ the Civic Center.”

Parks and Recreation invites all community members to select a favorite playground design and name on the Grand Traverse County Parks and Recreation Facebook page. Community members also may attend the special County Parks and Recreation Commission meeting – devoted to selecting the final playground design – on Thursday, March 24 at 5 p.m. in Commission Chambers on the second floor of the Governmental Center, 400 Boardman Avenue. A public hearing about the playground is on the agenda.

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Contact: Kristine Erickson, Director, Grand Traverse County Parks and Recreation Department, 231-922-4511; kerickson@grandtraverse.org