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New nature center proposed for Presque Isle

Local organization to lease former island caretaker's home

By CHRISTOPHER DIEM Journal Staff Writer

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MARQUETTE - MooseWood Nature Center and the Superior Watershed Partnership unveiled plans for a new nature center at Presque Isle Park at Monday's Marquette City Commission meeting.

The two groups want to build a community nature center near the entrance to Presque Isle, on the south side of Shiras Pool. Their plans call for three connected buildings housing offices for MooseWood and SWP, an observation tower, and an event/exhibit space shared by the groups.

The current MooseWood and pool buildings, to the east of Shiras Pool, would be removed. Shiras Pool would be turned into a natural pond to view wildlife.

Scot Stewart, chairman of the MooseWood board, said the nature center would provide space for presentations and classroom workshops for area schools.

He said the center would draw people to the area, describing it as "a facility that would provide interpretation for probably one of the most unique ... spectacular city parks in the country."

On Monday, SWP officials asked to lease the Presque Isle caretaker's home to use as office space while they raise money for the new center, likely a three- to five-year endeavor, according to Carl Lindquist, executive director of the partnership.

Lindquist said the group would pay all utility costs and pay for modest renovations to the building. The city commission unanimously agreed to lease the building to SWP for \$1 a year.

The city had considered demolishing the building, which has been unoccupied for several years, at an estimated cost of \$70,000.

Commissioner Robert Niemi said the reuse of the building was a great way to save taxpayers the cost of demolition while also providing a benefit to the community.

Commissioner Beth Linna said the proposed center is a great opportunity for the park and fits in with what the community wants there.

"I truly think Presque Isle is really a jewel and this is just going to add more polish to it," Commissioner Don Ryan said. "I'm just really excited about this."

Both groups were "very good and qualified" Commissioner Don Potvin said, adding the center would enhance the learning ability of many children.

Article Photos



MooseWood Nature Center and the Superior Watershed Partnership unveiled plans for a new nature center at Presque Isle Park at Monday's Marquette City Commission meeting. Plans include a new facility and turning Shiras Pool, above, into a natural pond. (Journal photo by Julia Woehrer)

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