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Council approves Greenfield splash park money

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GREENFIELD — The town's children should have a splash park to cool off in by late July or early August.

This week, Town Council approved \$50,000 the town needed to pledge to receive a \$200,000 grant from the state.

The money will come from the state's Our Common Backyard Grant program after July 1, according to Christy Moore, the town's recreation director, who plans to put the project out to bid. The program encourages towns and cities across the state to building new playgrounds and spray parks.

The council didn't approve the \$50,000, though, until after Precinct 3 Councilor Brickett Allis and Precinct 7 Councilor Karen "Rudy" Renaud voiced their objections.

While Allis said the town is spending too much money and needs to start to tighten its belt, Renaud expressed her concern about the same, but also about putting in a splash park before a skate or dog park — two ideas that have been discussed for several years — and locating it in a town park that has had problems with drug dealing and use before the problem is solved.

Allis said the town should not continue to pursue grant money, especially when taxpayers have to provide matching funds, just because it can. He said it should instead start looking long and hard at the money it is spending.

Renaud said it will not cost taxpayers just the \$50,000 to build the park, but maintenance and liability

expenses for as long as the park exists.

She said a couple of large groups of Greenfield residents have been advocating for skate and dog parks for several years and feels that those should be priorities. She said those seemed to have stalled, while the splash park has jumped to the front of the line.

Renaud said she is also concerned that young children will step on hypodermic needles left overnight in the park by addicts. She said the town should make sure the park is clean and the drug problem has gone away before building such a feature there for young children.

Moore said the town plans to order the equipment and then have a contractor install it, because it will be less expensive doing it that way.

She said recreation and public works have a diagram of a splash park that is 20 by 70 feet with a 5-foot apron around it. She said the Hillside Park Splash Park won't be quite as big, but she's hoping it will be close.

Hillside Park sits on 4.97 acres, so Moore said there is plenty of room.

"The splash park will be right next to the playground," said Moore. "Children will be able to play and then go get cooled off."

Moore said the splash park will run on a timer. She said children will push an activation bollard to get the water flowing. The water will stay on for however long the town determines and then the bollard will have to be pushed again to reactivate it.

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