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## Valpo parks to receive 'specific' 5-year plan

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VALPARAISO -- By the next Valparaiso Parks and Recreation Board meeting, plans for the next five years will be specific.

On Nov. 23, Leon Younger of PROS Consulting of Indianapolis will present the final draft of the master plan and the board -- including a new member to replace Deb Butterfield, who has been selected for the City Council -- will vote on it.

Younger addressed the board on Tuesday, recapping the direction in which the Parks Board and residents wanted to go. That direction is to make a plan that lists what the community wants and not just what it needs, he said.

But that also will include innovative ways to pay for it, such as relationships with other not-for-profits and schools, Parks Director John Seibert said.

Big projects won't be paid by taxes.

"That's just not the environment that we're going to do," Seibert said.

In the next month, PROS will prioritize residents' desires as shown in surveys and town meetings for the report. But the report also will identify funding sources, address equipment needs and review the cost of doing business with park programs.

Although a master plan is supposed to last five years, this one will project 10 years and 20 years of future needs and wants, Seibert said.

Parks and recreation departments need master plans updated every five years for eligibility for state and federal grants, according to Seibert.

Surveys and meetings showed that residents and city officials consider maintaining and upgrading parks and programs a priority. Residents also rated hiking and walking trails as first in new items wanted and a city pool as the second.

New items can be paid for with impact fees from developers, but park maintenance cannot, said Matt Eckerle of the Indianapolis financial consulting firm Umbaugh.

The impact fee has been recalculated along with master plan updates and the state requires it to be updated every five years.

A committee that included developers and Realtors projected what the city would need with growth and the new impact fee would be lower than the current one when it takes effect in May. Developers would pay \$974 per new house instead of the current \$1,331.

The new impact fee will first go to the Plan Commission for approval, then go before the City Council twice for eventual approval.

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