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Town Council Receives Final Report for Annex Property Recommendation Supports Community Wish for an Aquatics/Fitness Facility

After years of study, community outreach and conceptual design, the Vienna Town Council received the final recommendation for future use for the now-vacant, three-acre Annex property on Center Street at a work session tonight in the Community Room at the Vienna Police Department. The Town's contractor, Kimmel-Bogrette, delivered a final presentation that included schematic concepts for an indoor recreational pool with lap lanes and a water playground on one level, and a fitness center on a second level that overlooks the pool.

The recommended uses for the property ties in with the community's top two priorities expressed through a robust outreach campaign over the past year that included in-person workshops and a statistically valid community survey. A recreational pool and a fitness center also emerged as the community's top two priorities in a separate parks master planning process.

"Vienna residents are very health-conscious, and this is something they have been asking for, for a long time," said Mayor Linda Colbert. "It's exciting that we now have the opportunity to make it a reality."

Kimmel-Brogrette projects the cost to construct the aquatics and fitness facility ranges from nearly \$21 million to \$26.5 million. At the work session, the Town Council expressed interest in pursuing the new facility sooner rather than later and sharing with the community that it would be funded by a temporary, one percent meals tax increase dedicated specifically for the aquatics/fitness facility construction, which would enable it to open by 2030. Without the meals tax, the earliest the facility could open in 2040 through the Town's usual capital improvement planning process.

"The Town Council implemented a temporary meals tax increase once before from 2002 to 2008, and that's how we paid for the Town Green," said Mayor Linda Colbert. "Despite the extra penny tax on the dollar, overall restaurant revenues increased during that time, and we have an opportunity now to use the same formula to construct an aquatics and fitness center in the



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heart of Vienna. We're talking about an extra 3 cents for a \$3 cup of coffee or an extra 15 cents on a \$15 meal to pay for a highly desired Town facility as quickly as possible."

If implemented, the meals tax increase would be in effect for 10 years before sunseting. Before voting on the proposal, the Vienna Town Council wants to get community input through additional outreach and a public hearing. Residents can also provide feedback by emailing the full Council at council@viennava.gov or by calling the Town Clerk's office at 703-255-6304. The Sept. 30, 2024, work session presentation materials can be viewed online at <https://bit.ly/TOVmeetings>.

The Town acquired the Annex property on Center Street S. in 2020 when it purchased it from the former Faith Baptist Church for \$5 million. The church building served as a temporary police headquarters from 2021 to 2023 while the new police department was being constructed next door. Bringing the church building up to code for parks and recreation use was deemed to be too costly and the Vienna Town Council voted to demolish the building to make way for a new use.

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