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Ambrose sees lawsuit settlement, new pool on horizon

By Rick Radin
Contra Costa County
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PITTSBURG -- Ambrose Park and Recreation District is nearing a settlement with Contra Costa County on how to divide developer fees, according to sources on both sides.

The district sued the county in October 2009 for the rights to about \$400,000 in developer fees for park maintenance and construction.

Pittsburg annexed the park in 2008. Bay Point residents comprise about 80 percent of the district, with the remainder in Pittsburg.

Contra Costa County disputed that Ambrose has the right to all the money because the county also operates four parks in unincorporated Bay Point.

The county wants Ambrose to take over maintenance of all the parks in return for the right to keep all the money, according to Supervisor Federal Glover, whose district includes unincorporated Bay Point.

Cities and counties are authorized under state law to pass ordinances requiring developers to set aside land, donate conservation easements, or pay fees for park improvements.

"They've received a portion of this money in the past, and now they want all of it," Glover said. "We would like them to take over and maintain all the parks in a manner that works well for Bay Point."

Both sides expect an agreement within the next couple of months.

The district thinks it should get the money because the development that is the fee source is within the district's boundaries, Ambrose General Manager Tarry Smith said.

"We did file an action to

make sure that we were heard," Smith said. "We're working cooperatively toward getting the matter taken care of."

In the meantime, the district has raised \$2.2 million to go ahead with the first phase of its master plan, building a swimming pool to replace one that was closed because of safety issues two years ago.

The decades-old Ambrose Park pool had an antiquated filter system tied to drownings in other parts of the country.

Architects are working on plans for a pool complex. The district expects to seek bids from contractors by April or May. Construction should begin in the fall, with completion during summer 2012.

The Buchanan Park pool in Pittsburg also has been closed, leaving Pittsburg and Bay Point without public pools for two summers in a row.

"We're going to have another summer with no

pool, unfortunately," Smith said.

The master plan calls for about \$13 million in additional upgrades, including a new soccer field, irrigation, tennis courts, dog park and an outdoor amphitheater, Smith said.

The district is applying for state grants to continue the project after the pool is finished, he said.

"What part of (the master plan) we do will be determined by how much money we receive," he said.

Contact Rick Radin at 925-779-7166.

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