

OCC swimming slowly on YMCA pool pact

BY RALPH R. ECHTINAW
STAFF WRITER

There might be a free swimming pool in the future for Oakland Community College, but getting it could be harder than swimming the English Channel.

The North Oakland YMCA is trying to work out a deal in which it would build (and pay for) an indoor pool on the Auburn Hills campus and share the result with OCC.

The pool would be built on five acres behind the Criminal Justice Center. OCC would provide the land for free.

The college board of trustees slowed the already slow process April 8 when it declined to pass a resolution allowing OCC's name to be used in a YMCA-funded study to see if enough money can be raised through private donations to build the pool. (Estimated cost is \$3.5 million.)

The resolution was withdrawn without a vote after discussion, said college spokesman George Cartsonis. "The board is very cautious about this."

North Oakland YMCA Executive Director Larry Scramlin is confused by the board's caution. "We're not quite sure where things are," he said. Asked what the board objected to, Scramlin said, "We're still trying to figure that out."

Board chairman David Hackett said the resolution "tied us too closely to (the YMCA) fund-raising campaign. It's going to be reworded in a more suitable manner."

Also objecting was Rochester Hills resident Tom McCarthy, who spoke for the Great Lakes Club Management Association, representing 30 health clubs in metro Detroit.

The association's complaint, McCarthy said, is that YMCA outlets are "tax-exempt charities" that unfairly compete with privately owned health clubs and gyms that pay beaucoup taxes.

McCarthy questioned the value

of having the North Oakland YMCA anchored in Rochester, serving the relatively affluent surrounding communities, when a nearby city like Pontiac has no YMCA at all and many of its residents can ill afford health club membership. "There's a question of charity in our mind," he said.

The OCC trustees said they'll let McCarthy and the association work with them on planning the joint venture.

Although McCarthy empha-

sized that the association is "not looking to get into an adversarial relationship," he added that the membership is opposed to the OCC/YMCA deal anyway. "I just don't think (the YMCA) belongs there," he said.

McCarthy also objected to the deal based on the YMCA's roots in the Christian religion. "Why should (Christian organizations) have a preference over Jewish people or Islam?" he asked.

Hackett rejects that argument.

The word Christian might be part of the Y's name, he said, "but that's not their mission anymore."

The North Oakland YMCA, with 1,200 members, hasn't had a pool since 1984, when its Pontiac facility was shut down. Unlike the Detroit Metro YMCA, which operates 13 centers in this area, North Oakland YMCA has nothing but a Rochester office, two full-time staff members and some sports programs for kids.

Housing discussion set Friday

"Diversified Families and Neighborhoods: Building Our Future Block by Block" will be the topic of a public forum Friday evening sponsored by the Oakland County Center for Open Housing.

The program will begin at 6:30 p.m. at Standard Federal Bank, 2600 W. Big Beaver, Troy. "We're asking people to get there at 6 p.m. because seating will be limited," said Terri Purdue, a co-director of OCCOH.

The center, based in Bingham Farms, promotes racial integration in housing throughout Oakland County.

"The panel will discuss such issues as (the center's) community outreach, education, housing counseling, incentive loans and family volunteer programs," according to Purdue.

Panel participants will be Miriam Blanks-Smart, an attorney and president of the Southern Oakland chapter of the NAACP; Rebecca Holowicki, director of the Oakland County Community and Minority Affairs; Sharkey Haddad, director of the Southfield-based Chaldean Federation of America and co-chairman of the Southfield-Lathrup Multi-cultural Coalition; Cliff Schrupp, executive director of the Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit; Richard Lobenthal, Midwest director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith; and Shirley Bryant, director of community relations for the Birmingham Public Schools.

Moderator will be Huel Perkins, WJBK-TV newscaster. Co-sponsors of the forum are Standard Federal, The Fourmable Group and the South Oakland Board of Realtors.

For more information, call the housing center at 647-0577.

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