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Pool, park progress

Gordonsville completes park parcel purchase

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The Town of Gordonsville is one step closer to a new swimming pool.

Late last month, the Gordonsville Town Council finalized the purchase of 1.197 acres of Verling Park from CSX—something it's been trying to do off and on for more than 25 years.

The \$37,800 deal builds on the momentum of other recent property acquisitions adjacent to the pool property, bringing the entire pool and park parcel under town ownership.

Mayor Bob Coiner said that was an important factor.

"If we want a new pool, we need control of the land," he said. "With the whole block, we can do a lot more."

In 2018, with the help of the Piedmont Environmental Council's Town to Trail working group, the town acquired a quarter-acre property at the corner of Linney and Piedmont Street beside Verling Park. Last year, the group purchased a vacant lot on Allen Street near the pool.

According to town manager Debbie Kendall, the town has been attempting to acquire the 1.197-acre CSX parcel since 1994. In 2007, the town offered the railroad \$10,000 for the property, but that offer was not accepted. In 2018, the town again approached CSX about purchasing the property, this time for \$29,700—the appraised value plus 10%. She said the railroad accepted the offer in December 2018.

It took a year to finalize the purchase, which closed Jan. 30, she said. With legal fees and survey costs, the town spent \$37,800 to get control of the entire pool and park property.

"It's all about getting a bigger, nicer pool that will last the town for the next 100 years," Coiner said. The current pool opened in 1956 and the mayor was there the day it opened.

But the pool is not regulation size and too small to accommodate swim



FILE PHOTO BY HILARY HOLLADAY

The Town of Gordonsville recently completed the purchase of a 1.197-acre tract of Verling Park adjacent to Dix Memorial Pool. The property, which had been owned by CSX, housed the park's picnic shelter and playground equipment. The purchase gives the town control of the entire block.

meets. It also lacks features and amenities of more modern pools, like splash pads. Still, it is one of only a few public pools between Charlottesville and Fredericksburg.

Kendall said approximately 900 to 1,000 patrons attend the pool each summer.

"It's good to have the pool for children because it gives them some structure during the summer," Coiner noted. "They get to spend time with their friends from school and gives them a place to go and keeps them out of trouble."

While the town's plans for the park and a larger pool remain a work in progress, control of the property affords the town and its partners the opportunity to pursue grants and initiate fundraising efforts.

"The town can't do this all by itself," Coiner noted. "We're not going to bankrupt the town to do this. We'll need broader community support."

Currently, the town has \$49,284 set aside for new pool construction, including approximately \$26,000 transferred from the New Millennium Sports Committee nearly a decade ago.

"If you've ever given to the building

a new pool, we've still got it," Coiner noted, "but we may need you to give a little more to help us get it done."

Meanwhile, at its Jan. 27 meeting, the town received a \$5,000 check from the Orange County Tourism Advisory Committee to help purchase new playground equipment at Verling Park.

"Parks are one of the things that help build community," committee chair Kent Woods said. "Parks get people out of their homes and provide a place to meet their neighbors and hopefully once they're out of the house they stop in and support the nearby businesses."

He said the committee's donation is a good way to help support Gordonsville's efforts and help local citizens build memories and embrace their park while enriching their lives.

Verling Park and Dix Memorial Pool are located at the corner of Market and Allen streets a block off of Main Street near downtown Gordonsville. The pool normally opens for the season on Memorial Day weekend. For more information about the pool or contributing to its future, contact Kendall at 832-2233.