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Fairfield planning updates to Harbin Park

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FAIRFIELD — The city's largest park is next in line for a makeover.

Thousands visit Harbin Park each year thanks to its natural amenities, such as hills for snow sledding, and its events — from high school cross country meets to Red, White and Kaboom.

City council heard the first of three readings this week to set aside \$50,000 for architectural/engineering services for the project to Brandstetter Carroll Inc.

That same company also oversaw improvements to Fairfield's Aquatic Center, said Jim Bell, the city's park's director.

"In the master plan we did in 2014, that was one of the things that was identified, to freshen up and maintain what we had .. Harbin was purchased in the mid-70s. It was an old farm. Most of the amenities up there are from the mid-80s to the early 1990s," Bell said.

In addition to maintaining what the city had, the master plan, based on citizen input, also emphasizes improving and expanding trails and connections in the city's parks, including Harbin, according to a city staff report.

The process for Harbin Park will include three public meetings: two to solicit public input from residents and one to review concept art. Bell projected the first public hearing would be held next spring.

There will also be a "detailed plan to provide pedestrian and/or bicycle connectivity to various adjacent neighborhoods," according to the report, along with a perimeter paved bike/hiking path.

"The park's just dated," Bell said

Resident Mary Beth Helmes doesn't visit Harbin frequently, said she would "appreciate a nice track to walk on, I guess, a hiking trail. A place to walk the dog."

"The more playground equipment for the grandchildren the better," said Karen Bell, , who visits Harbin Park in the summer.

An expansion of Fairfield's Marsh Lake is currently being planned.

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