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Barthelmas Park Expansion Moves Forward Following State Funding Approval Circleville Aquatic Center Project

CIRCLEVILLE, Ohio — Circleville residents are one step closer to once again having a community pool.

State and City officials announced Thursday that the Circleville Aquatic Center portion of the project will move forward, following the approval of state capital appropriations funding that includes \$2 million for the aquatic center through Senate Bill 450. The announcement was made at Barthelmas Park and included state and local leaders, State Representative Brian Stewart (R-Ashville), Mayor Michelle Blanton, members of Circleville City Council, and city staff.

The funding marks a major milestone in the effort to restore public aquatic recreation to Circleville for the first time since the closure of the Ted Lewis Park Pool in 2015.

“For generations, the public pool was an important part of Circleville's community life and culture,” said Mayor Michelle Blanton. “Many people in our community have fond summer memories of afternoons spent at the pool with family and friends. We are incredibly grateful for this investment from the State of Ohio, which allows us to move forward with bringing a community pool back to Circleville much sooner than we originally thought possible. The Circleville Aquatic Center will be more than a place to swim. It will be a gathering place where families can connect, children can create lasting memories, and future generations can experience the same sense of community that so many residents remember from their own childhoods.”

The state funding was included in Senate Bill 450, which was approved by the Ohio Senate on Tuesday and the Ohio House of Representatives on Wednesday. The legislation now heads to Governor Mike DeWine for final approval.

“When I became House Finance Chairman, I committed immediately to bringing a public swimming pool back to Circleville and Pickaway County for the first time in decades,” Stewart

said. "In my role leading the budget process, I fought hard for our community, and I am very pleased the City is committing to partnering with the state to make this project a reality."

The overall Barthelmas Park Expansion is expected to cost approximately \$15 million, with the aquatic facility itself accounting for roughly \$7 million of the project. In addition to the \$2 million secured through the state capital budget process, the City of Circleville plans to contribute approximately \$3.5 million toward construction costs, with the remaining funding expected to come through community partnerships, sponsorships, and fundraising efforts.

The project is expected to require approximately 18 months of engineering, design, and site preparation before construction begins, at which time, the City will have a more clear idea of a timeline for the construction and opening.

City leaders began exploring options for a new aquatic facility several years ago after acquiring property at Barthelmas Park and evaluating opportunities to expand recreational amenities for residents. Initial concepts placed a future pool facility behind the existing sports fields, but continued planning and community conversations have helped shape the vision into a larger aquatic center designed to serve residents for decades to come.

Over the past year and a half, city officials have met with community stakeholders, including Circleville City Schools, the YMCA, local organizations, and residents, to gather feedback on recreational needs and priorities. Through a series of town hall meetings and community conversations, residents consistently expressed a desire for expanded recreational opportunities and the return of a public pool.

Once completed, the Circleville Aquatic Center will provide opportunities for recreation, swimming instruction, youth programming, community events, and partnerships with local organizations. The facility is expected to become both a recreational destination and a community gathering space that serves residents of all ages.

Additional details regarding project design, fundraising opportunities, and construction timelines will be shared as they become available.