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Public can weigh in: Will Portsmouth approve $10 million purchase of Community Campus?

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PORTSMOUTH — The City Council is scheduled to hold a public hearing on Dec. 20 — and then take a vote — on a proposed resolution to bond as much as $10 million to buy the Community Campus and 34 acres of land around it.

The council at that same meeting is slated to hold a public hearing and vote on a resolution to authorize a supplemental appropriation of $116,000 for costs needed to pay for operational expenses at Community Campus, which houses a number of nonprofits.

The votes on the monies for the Community Campus purchase and its operations were scheduled after the City Council voted unanimously to do so last week.

The City Council voted unanimously in September to allow City Manager Karen Conard to negotiate a purchase-and-sale agreement for the city to buy the Community Campus facility and land around it.

Previous story: How Portsmouth plans to fund $10 million Community Campus purchase

City officials reached a tentative deal shortly before then to purchase the property from the Foundation For Seacoast Health.

When the deal was announced, city and foundation officials said the tenants that operate out of the Community Campus off West Road will be allowed to stay after the sale goes through.

$10 million 'bargain' for city

Reached Monday, outgoing City Councilor Peter Whelan called the proposed purchase “a great opportunity” for the city, even though the city has not decided how it will use the property.

Portsmouth to test for PFAS in new turf field: Is it dangerous? City says no. Others disagree.

“It’s a bargain at $10 million. At the same time, you don’t want to have it sitting there for years without having a plan,” he said.

Whelan believes the new City Council, which will take office on Jan. 2, “needs as soon as possible to work on the whole visioning process for the entire city.”

“They need to look at all the properties the city owns and figure out a long-term strategy about how to use them,” he said.

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Mayor-elect Deaglan McEachern noted “in terms of investing in land in Portsmouth, I don’t think it’s ever a poor decision and they’re not making any more of it.”

Asked what he’d like to see the property used for, McEachern said, “I think there’s a lot of opportunity there for housing and more recreation.”