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### New pavilion planned for Clermont waterfront

By Martin E. Comas, Orlando Sentinel

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CLERMONT

The city is moving forward with plans to build a large open-air pavilion with a stage, lights and covered seating for hundreds of people on Waterfront Park.

The hope is to begin transforming the park on the southern shores of Lake Minneola into a premier spot for residents and visitors.

"We need it," City Council member Keith Mullins said. "It's a very, very active place."

But after listening to a presentation at a recent council meeting, officials said they would like to see the cost reduced. The entire project — which includes a meeting room, a stage with lights and sound system, restrooms and a covered pavilion — is estimated to cost more than \$1.3 million, according to a cost analysis by GatorSketch Architects. That estimate would include demolishing the old Highlander Hut building.

The project would be paid from reserve money collected from the city's parks and recreation impact fees.

"It's a lot higher than the previous estimate, and we were all a little surprised the cost jumped up that much," City Manager Wayne Saunders said. "So we'll try to get that cost down. We were looking at about \$950,000."

Still, city leaders and others say it's time to improve Waterfront Park, considering that it's the site of several large events every year including the popular Pig on the Pond barbecue competition and the Great Floridian Triathlon, both of which draw large



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crowds to Lake Minneola's shores.

Every time an event is held "the tents go up and then the tents come down," Mullins said. The pavilion along with the stage will provide a permanent facility. It also will benefit residents because the new lights would shine away from the nearby homes, according to Mullins.

Although the stage and pavilion will not be as large as the bandshell in Eustis' Ferran Park, it will give enough space for small acts, such as middle- or high-school student band performances.

"There's nothing like going out to listen to kids play music on a cool evening," Mullins said.

Ray San Fratello, president of the South Lake Chamber of Commerce, said Waterfront Park can be developed into one of the city's jewels, especially if Clermont can connect the area with the downtown district a few blocks to the southwest.

"The larger vision is how do you incorporate that waterfront into the downtown and make it easier for visitors to navigate between the two areas," San Fratello said.

Clermont also is moving ahead with plans to build a new community center to replace the outdated Jenkins Auditorium. City officials are leaning toward building a 10,000-square-foot building where the old Cooper Memorial Library used to sit near City Hall on Montrose Street.

The city also has had long plans to build a community center on six acres next to Waterfront Park.

In the meantime, city officials hope to have the new Waterfront Park pavilion constructed in time for the next Pig on the Pond event in March.

"This is going to be a great, beautiful facility," council member Ray Goodgame said. "It will be something that the entire community will use and enjoy. We have no place to hold an event for 350 people out of the sun in the summer."

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