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O.T. Sloan Park Not Likely Site for Sport Complex

By Kathryn Trogdon

SANFORD — After hopes that a multi-sport complex could be built at Sanford's O.T. Sloan Park, as of Tuesday that dream will most likely not be feasible at that site.

At a joint meeting Tuesday, members of the Sanford City Council and the Lee County Board of Commissioners heard the results of a feasibility study for the multi-sport complex project completed by Brailsford and Dunlavey, a program management firm based in Washington, D.C.

Joe Collums, assistant project manager for Brailsford and Dunlavey, said since the O.T. Sloan Park site consisted of only 42 acres of developable land, including existing uses and woodlands, it would not adequately meet the needs of Sanford and Lee County's vision for the project.

"The O.T. Sloan site has limited ability to really achieve the true vision and capitalize on that. It also would require taking out everything that is there," he said, referring to the Boys and Girls Clubs of Lee County's O.T. Sloan Park location and the O.T. Sloan Pool.

Brailsford and Dunlavey staff suggested a 70 acre or larger site with \$14.7 million in outdoor facilities, including four natural grass and two synthetic rectangular fields, which could be used for soccer, lacrosse and other sports, and five diamond fields, which could accommodate softball and baseball.

"Baseball and softball tournaments run in North Carolina from February to December on almost a weekend basis so there's an opportunity to bring them in without a doubt," Collums said.

Sanford Mayor Chet Mann said the city and county were looking at several other 75 acre or larger sites in the area, but he couldn't disclose the locations.

"The last thing we want to see is a mass exodus of our kids going 15 miles down the road to play ball [in nearby communities]," he said.

Collums said out of the more than 1,000 Lee County residents surveyed during the feasibility study, there was overwhelming support for the project. The next step in the project would be to further investigate alternative site options and begin detailed planning for the project's design, operations and more.

"Everything that's ever worth having in a community takes a lot of work," Mann said.