



Mayor-elect Shari Decter Hirst sits with YMCA board chair Terry Parlow, with executive director Lon Cullen in the background, on Friday as they explain their meetings on the future of the Sportsplex pool and the downtown facility's aquatic project. (Colin Corneau/Brandon Sun)

City, YMCA touch base

BY ALLISON DOWD

Mayor-elect Shari Decter Hirst has pledged not to throw the YMCA off track in its plans to construct the \$17-million Dood Cristall Family YMCA.

City officials met with the YMCA on Friday to discuss council's desire to re-examine the proposed closure of the Canada Games Sportsplex pool two months after the Y's new downtown facility is opened.

Decter Hirst says while the city will undertake an "expeditious" review to determine the true aquatic

needs of the community and the sustainability of the Sportsplex's pool, council will not deviate from the joint use agreement that has already been signed with the YMCA.

"The Y is quite far along in that design process and we don't want to stop it," she said. "They can't interrupt that planning process because, at this point, it has a momentum of its own."

However, Decter Hirst does say the memorandum of understanding signed by the two sides could be revisited if the review uncovers a desire by the community to keep the

Sportsplex open and the finances to match that desire.

But the pool will not be kept open "at all costs," she stressed.

"At some point, we may have a discussion around the value of keeping that pool open and the community may, in fact, decide that there's not that value equation, that the cost benefit analysis doesn't work."

YMCA board chair Terry Parlow says they are satisfied with the process the city will be undertaking and that the rug won't be pulled out from under their plans.

"This is a partnership," he said. "We have to all sit back

and have a look at it ... we have to respect that the design is still going forward the way it is, but it can be obviously altered."

Decter Hirst is confident the city's options on the future Sportsplex pool will be known "fairly quickly," likely by the time the YMCA issues a construction tender for its new facility at the end of next month.

Parlow told the Sun earlier this week he is hopeful construction of the new facility can begin in the spring.

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