

The development of Grace K. Cousins Park remains on hold. Dwain Midget, director of community development and education for the city of Tulsa, said this week that the city is committed to the project but that planning for it will not go forward until the city has a better sense of Bixby's plans for a bridge across the Arkansas River. "We are going to proceed with this park, but right now it is kind of hard to say what the final outcome is going to be" with the possible bridge "looming in the background," he said. The Tulsa Park and Recreation Department put design work on the bridge on hold in late July after Tulsa City Councilor Phil Lakin and Bixby city officials presented a schematic rendering showing the proposed location of the bridge. The bridge would land just south of the park, between 124th and 126th streets, and would include an extension of Delaware Avenue through Cousins Park to 121st Street. As part of that process, the city has created renderings showing several proposed locations for the road through the park. Bixby officials said previously that they would propose spending the city's \$11.3 million share of Vision2 funds on helping to build a bridge across the river. After voters rejected the Vision2 proposal, Bixby Mayor Ray Bowen said the city would continue to pursue a bridge project, perhaps in conjunction with the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority. "We would do anything we could to mitigate the effect of the road along the river that would have any bearing on Cousins Park," Bowen said Tuesday. "And we think there are ways to do that so that we could be able to make it workable." Midget acknowledged that with no way of knowing if or when a Bixby bridge might be built, it is hard to say how long the city of Tulsa would wait before going forward with Cousins Park. "It just doesn't make sense to spend money on the park and then have to spend money to modify it," he said. When the time comes, the city will move expeditiously to construct the park, Midget said. "That could be a month (from now) or that

could be six months," he said. "I think that everyone that is involved wants this to get resolved." John Shivel, whose late wife, Vicki Cousins Shivel, worked to see the park constructed in honor of her mother, said the Cousins family still wants to see the park created. "The City Council last year allocated \$245,000 to begin the project," Shivel said. "The Cousins family would like to see the process begin in earnest." The funds were to be used on Phase I of the project, on which construction was scheduled to begin by this past July. The additional \$2.2 million to complete the final three phases was to be raised through private donations. Charles Cousins conceived of the park in the late 1970s or early '80s as a tribute to his wife, Grace Cousins. The Cousins family donated 10 acres at the southwest corner of 121st Street and Yale Avenue to the Park and Recreation Department in 1998, with the stipulation that it remain a conservation area and that the family be involved in its design. A few years ago, the city bought 35 more acres bounded by 121st, Yale and the Arkansas River for \$950,000 with the intention of eventually turning the entire site into a park. As now proposed, Cousins Park would be a combination nature center, nature preserve and pioneer park operated with assistance from the Oxley Nature Center Association. Conceptual designs call for the construction of a farm house, barn, corral, orchard and a schoolhouse that could be used for conducting classes. Kevin Canfield 918-581-8313 kevin.canfield@tulsaworld.com SUBHEAD: A proposed b

Arkansas River leaves questions as to how the park will be developed. Original Print

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