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YMCA honors pledge at Chesapeake park

The YMCA has ended its attempt to start a summer camp at Northwest River Park in Chesapeake. It is honoring a commitment to not cause negative environmental effects at the 763-acre park; the YMCA would have had to build a sewage treatment system there.

The decision gladdens many residents in southern Chesapeake. They had protested — sometimes vociferously — the camp, and they'd tried to overturn a City Council rezoning of 38 acres at the park. They feared the atmosphere along the park's trails and camping and fishing areas would change, and residents claimed the council hadn't informed them about the camp proposal early enough.

City officials could have done a better job communicating. However, the YMCA's plan was commendable, and the public-private partnership would have benefited everyone. More than 300 children would have attended.

The YMCA would have spent \$3 million on the project, including a 4,000-square-foot pool and aquatic center. It would have been the first public pool in the city. Chuck Harris, CEO of the YMCA of South Hampton Roads, said the agency had already spent \$350,000 on the Chesapeake summer camp.

Fortunately, the agency, which has a strong record in the region, says it will continue to work with city officials to find another property. For the children, the Y and the city, that's the correct course.

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