

## Grand Haven, YMCA agree on Ski Bowl deal

By JEFF ALEXANDER

Chronicle staff writer

GRAND HAVEN — The Mulligan's Hollow Ski Bowl was spared an early death recently as the city of Grand Haven and Tri-Cities Family YMCA signed an agreement to keep the facility open for at least another season.

The one-year agreement approved by the Grand Haven City Council turns over all Ski Bowl operations to the YMCA during the coming winter.

The city will contribute \$3,000 to offset insurance costs to operate the facility, but the agreement takes a financial drain off the cash-strapped city. Last year, the city paid about \$7,000 to insure the Ski Bowl.

Prior to opening it, the YMCA must have the Ski Bowl in a condition so as to obtain a state license to operate the facility, which is a popular recreational facility with area youth. The lighted Ski Bowl includes downhill ski runs, a tow rope, a skating rink and warming building.

The pact came five months after the council eliminated all funding for the Ski Bowl to help balance the city budget. Last year the city spent \$11,000 on the Ski Bowl operations and had to seek contributions from other Tri-Cities municipalities to offset operating losses.

City and YMCA officials said they were pleased with the agreement.

Mayor Howard Meyer said the agreement "accomplishes what we set out to accomplish," which was to keep the Ski Bowl open this winter within the limits of the city budget.

The YMCA board of directors unanimously approved the operating agreement, said YMCA Executive Director Scott Stinebower. The Ski Bowl is behind the YMCA building off Harbor Drive in the area known as Mulligan's Hollow.

Stinebower said YMCA officials hope they can at least break even on the Ski Bowl operation. YMCA officials also would like to operate the facility on a long-term basis, he said.

***The YMCA plans to charge its members \$70 for a seasonal pass to the Ski Bowl, and non-members would pay \$100. Daily ski passes for YMCA members would be \$6 on weekdays and \$8 on weekends.***

City officials said they would review the pact reached with the YMCA next spring, and look at the possibility of signing a longer term agreement.

City Attorney Neal Stanton has said a long-term agreement with the YMCA to operate the Ski Bowl could cause legal problems because it involves city park land. Under the city charter, a lease involving Grand Haven park land must be approved by voters.

Stinebower's more immediate concern is for a cold and snowy winter, which will play a pivotal role in the success of the YMCA's attempt to operate the Ski Bowl.

Stinebower said he hopes to open the Ski Bowl before Christmas. Even if there is no snow on the ground, there are snow making machines at the site that can keep the facility open if the thermometer stays below 28 degrees, he said.

The YMCA plans to charge its members \$70 for a seasonal pass to the Ski Bowl, and non-members would pay \$100. Daily ski passes for YMCA members would be \$6 on weekdays and \$8 on weekends. Non-members would pay an additional \$2 for daily passes, Stinebower said.

The city had charged Grand Haven residents \$65 for a seasonal pass, and non-city residents were charged \$120 for a seasonal lift ticket.