

Light up Riverview: Alton park illuminated by Ameren Illinois

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - Thanks to a gift from **Ameren Illinois**, Alton couples may be able to get married with a scenic view, music enthusiasts may be able to see the **Alton Municipal Band** perform after sunset and a historically beautiful park may get another breath of life for years to come.

A check for \$17,700 was presented to **Alton Mayor Brant Walker** Wednesday afternoon by **Ameren Illinois CEO Richard Mark**. The money is destined to provide **Riverview Park** with new electrical systems. Those updates will be extremely instrumental and beneficial to future construction projects at the park, including work on the gazebo.

"We can immediately start fixing the gazebo," Walker said before the press conference. "It was awesome of Ameren to do this for us. This is huge."

Walker said the grant has been in the works for approximately one month. Mark said the gift was partially due to the beauty of the park, which was shown to him by **Illinois State Representative Dan Beiser (D-Alton)** who was also in attendance.

"It takes cooperation to get things done," Mark said. "I met with a lot of these elected officials at an air conditioner giveaway we did for low-income families. We could not have done that without the help of these elected officials."

Mark said he was told by Beiser about a wonderful park requiring lighting work in Alton. Beiser said he was happy to see the partnership which was able to occur from his comments.

"In Springfield, we have a tendency to see what is not working," he said. "When I'm in my district, I like seeing the effects of working together and what it can do."



Madison County Board Chairperson Alan Dunstan spoke as well. He said the event was his second time being at the park, and he really appreciated the view. He thanked Beiser for his contribution to the effort.

"These things happen because people like Dan Beiser bring it up to people like Richard Mark," he said. "I had no role in this. The person you have to thank for this is Dan Beiser."

This public/private partnership greatly assists the city in the wake of grant funding losses, **Alton Public Works Director Bob Barnhart** said.

"We've been tasked with maintaining and up-keeping a lot of parks, which have been in disrepair for years," he said. "Due to the state budget, we cannot rely on government funding. We've had several grants cut, and I'm not sure if they'll come back."

"It's fantastic to have a private/public partnership to address the issue. Without it, this would not been able to occur."

The electrical work occurring will include a new pole, which will bring electricity to the park via new wiring. The wiring will connect to a new outdoor meter. The current meter is located below the gazebo. Currently, Ameren Illinois installed a temporary wire bringing electricity to the park.

"The outdoor meter will be more convenient to us," **Ameren Illinois Electrical Supervisor Brian Doran** said. "People were trying to get in (to the gazebo) for vandalism, which made it harder for us to get in to read the meter."

Wednesday's conference surrounding the donation included a performance by the Alton Municipal Band, which Mark said was the first time in his 14 years of attending press conferences that has happened.

Ameren Illinois Communications Executive Brian Bretsch said the money donated to the City of Alton for improvements at Riverview Park was a bit of the \$2 million the company donates to good causes each year. Besides Riverview Park and the air conditioner giveaway, Ameren Illinois donates to causes to help young people such as the United Way.

Riverview Park is the highest naturally occurring overlook in Alton, at a height of 575 feet above the Mississippi River. It is located in the Christian Hill neighborhood and is on the National Register of Historic Places. It was founded in 1914.



