



Alton approves grant money usage to improve Bud Simpson Tennis Center

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ALTON - Cracked-top tennis courts may be a worry of the past in Gordon Moore Park at the end of this summer.

During last night's meeting of the Alton City Council, the city's leadership approved the usage of as much as \$50,000 in grants from Metro East Parks and Recreation for the much-needed repair of the Bud Simpson Tennis Center. That sum of \$50,000, which Alton Parks and Recreation Director Michael Haynes said he was sure fit the criteria for the grant, will be paired with nearly \$30,000 raised by the Simpson Memorial Tennis Program to fix the ageing tennis courts.

The eight courts in the complex were constructed in 1991, but have not seen any sort of resurfacing since 2006. Because of that, cracks have formed, and are getting worse with every major rain. Because of that major damage, the courts have been deemed unusable for many sanctioned matches.

Estimated cost for full repairs by the Simpson Memorial Tennis Program was listed at as much as \$100,000 on their fundraising website. They had a goal of raising \$50,000, which was guaranteed to be matched by the city. As of yesterday, the fundraising meter was at \$25,300. Haynes said the money raised would be enough for significant repairs.

According to the site, the Simpson Memorial Tennis Program had proposals from McConnell, Pro-Track and Sport Court after representatives from each contractor was able to look at the eight courts in person. Each deemed the courts "fixable," but the estimates were hovering around the \$100,000 mark.

Since the Alton City Council approved the usage of grants from Metro East Park and Recreation, work may begin on the courts as soon as June 1. If they do, the estimated time of repairs being completed would be early July. Courts could even be playable by Independence Day if the weather and working conditions are favorable.

That work includes:

- stripping existing surfaces
- filling cracks
- covering those cracks with geotextile fabric
- leveling, resurfacing and repainting courts

Once those repairs have been completed, each of the contractors told the Simpson Memorial Tennis Program those cracks would not return in the future. The City of Alton will also have to budget as much as \$11,000 to resurface the eight courts every five years. If that maintenance is kept regular, the courts should not show cracks for many years.