



Talking Alton's parks with Public Works Director Bob Barnhart

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON – Parks across Alton have been targeted for improvement by the city over the last year, and as summer comes to its end, taking with it peak park season, Riverbender.com asked Alton Public Works Director Bob Barnhart what all has been done through the summer of 2018 at parks across the city.

Gordon Moore Park

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The fact Gordon Moore is Alton's flagship park is no secret. In fact, the sprawling area of sports fields, pavilions, playgrounds and nature has seen several improvements over the course of the year. Barnhart said most of those improvements – as well as several of the improvements at other parks and streets across the city – did not dent the city's general fund. Instead, the resources came directly from grants, donations and even volunteer labor.

Perhaps the most obvious improvement to the park can be seen without even entering it. A second entrance to the park has been built just south of the first on Route 140. The funding for that came from Madison County and Barnhart said the city has been working with Alton's Building and Zoning Director Greg Caffey as well as the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to construct that entrance, which may be open late 2018 or early 2019.

Barnhart also said both entrances will soon be revamped through a federally-funded Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Grant, which will help improve traffic flow through the park.

“Mike Haynes has been doing a lot to get events and tournaments out to the park, but the traffic lines in and out of the park are an issue,” Barnhart said. “If we get these entrances improved through that grant funding, it will be great.”

Ameren Illinois has also been instrumental in Gordon Moore's improvement. Subsidies from the energy corporation have gone toward renovating and adding lighting to the Simpson Tennis Courts as well as subsidizing nearly the entire cost of a tub grinder, which makes mulch piles currently stored at Gordon Moore Park.

“When storms roll through and we have debris, our forestry guys go out and get it and it gets chipped up,” Barnhart said. “Ameren subsidized almost the entire cost of a tub grinder to turn those chips into usable mulch.”

That usable mulch is available to any Alton resident who would like to use it to better their property, Barnhart said. It is not available to businesses or landscapers, he said, but members of the general public are allowed to arrange a time to get some free mulch to utilize on their own properties. It is stored at Gordon Moore Park.

Some of that mulch may soon be made into a natural walking trail through the park, Barnhart said, due to a sustainability grant through Madison County. He said he is also looking into grant funding to replace the decaying bridge across the pond at the park, and for more trails throughout.

Volunteers from trade unions and local contractors have been instrumental in the completion of phase one of the new concession buildings, Barnhart said. They also assisted with the paving of lots near the all-inclusive playground, which now includes a family bathroom, as well as assisting in making some of the bleachers American with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant.

James Killion Park



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This year, the City of Alton installed approximately 500 feet of ADA-compliant sidewalks in that park as part of its yearly program to improve parks across the city.

Riverview Park



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In early 2018, Barnhart said the city installed a storm water drainage line as part of an EPA-mandated sewer separation project in the Christian Hill neighborhood. As part of that project, a line was added near the Sunken Garden area of Riverview Park to divert an over-abundance of water from there to lines off the bluffs for its eventual end in the river.

The failing sidewalks around the Sunken Garden were also removed, and new ones are being planned. Barnhart said he would like to add ADA-compliant sidewalks, roadways and a ramp into the park to assist with people who may have mobility concerns.

Milton Park

Some renewed hope was added in the direction of the nearly-defunct Milton Park at the convergence of Aberdeen and Oscar in Alton when the Alton Renegades Football Team was looking to maybe have a practice and game facility there. Unfortunately, funding goals were not met for that dream. Fortunately, Barnhart said the park, which has seemed to be all but forgotten, is still being looked at by the city.

He said the city is looking for possible uses and improvements to that park in the coming future.

Barnhart also wanted to ensure people know the work being done at the parks is not denting the general fund, but one of the reasons why people may be seeing work being done at parks like Gordon Moore, and not their local streets is because grant funding is earmarked for a certain type of use. He said work being done at parks now through grant funding will ultimately save money from being taken from the general fund because that work would have needed done eventually, and now the costs will not come from the general fund. That means money in the general fund can be use to pave more streets in the coming future.