



Letter to the Editor: A Hope Everyone Approaches Future Projects Of Wood River With Positive In Mind

by Mike Anderson

December 8 2020 10:16 AM



Letter to the Editor:

As the newest member of the Wood River City Council, I have spent much of the last few months learning about and listening to the concerns of the citizens of Wood River. During this time I have also tried my best to do what is right for the city in the most responsible way possible. I am a person who tries to find common ground and do what

is best for the entire city. During the last few months, I have observed much debate focused on the building of a recreation center. The one thing I have observed is that most everyone, on both sides of this issue, agree on one thing, and that being that no one is opposed to a recreation center. I feel this common ground is a good starting point going forward as we work to accomplish the many projects that are important for the city. I hope that everyone in the city approaches the future with an open mind and the good of Wood River in their hearts. Older citizens are nostalgic about the Round House while young families look to make their own memories for their children in Wood River. We are all on the same team. We should work together to help accomplish each other's goals and improve the city for everyone.

Sadly, our different opinions on the recreation center have made the headlines when many other important projects have also been an enormous focus for the city. The city is currently developing two major storm water retention projects that will help remove approximately 180 homes from the flood zone and allow for significant residential and retail development in the near future. These projects put money back into the pockets of our citizens and help increase our tax base. As well, there is also a major sewer separation project beginning as part of a larger goal of accomplishing sewer separation for the entire city.

The city has proceeded in moving forward with projects using all tools at their disposal to minimize the cost and impact to the citizens. Funding mechanisms include private and public partnerships which the city has pursued and continues to find. As well, the city has applied for grants to help fund these projects. The city has applied for two grants to assist in the building of the recreation center and is currently pursuing a \$2.5 million Park and Recreational Facilities Construction Program Grant (PARC) from the State of Illinois. These additional funds are important and the timing for applying for these funds is critical. The last time this grant was offered was 2014. The City of Wood River applied for the PARC grant in 2008 and 2009 for upgrades at the Aquatic Center but was told at that time the funds are for new development only. The city is also participating in loan forgiveness programs to help offset some of the cost of development of the two stormwater retention projects already underway. A 1% sales tax was proposed and citizens approved it to allow for a consistent revenue source to fund projects in the city without placing the entire burden on citizens.

Again, both private and public partnerships have and are being pursued, grants and forgivable loans have been applied for to help with cost, and the 1% sales tax money has been collected and is greater than anticipated for the first year.

I also want to acknowledge the hard work of the Wood River Park & Recreation staff. As well, I'd like to thank all of the employees of the city who have worked so hard on these projects that are making our city a better place. The city employees are doing the

work requested by the Wood River City Manager and Wood River City Council. As mentioned, these grants are not offered very often and the dates for the grant application required the city to take immediate action or risk leaving \$2.5 million on the table. This would have been an enormous disservice to the citizens. While the recreation center project has been the most talked about project, spending since March of this year has already been held to a minimum.

I have met with many of the people who work for our city and would like to assure all Wood River citizens that from our department heads down, we have a dedicated group of people who work hard every day for us all.

So, as a new councilman, I would like my fellow citizens to know that your thoughts and opinions have been heard. As well, I hope that you may now realize by the way in which the city has planned and the responsible way it has pursued these projects, the city has been listening all along.

Stay safe and Merry Christmas!

Mike Anderson

Wood River City Council

Opinions expressed in this section are solely those of the individual authors and do not represent the views of RiverBender.com or its affiliates. We provide a platform for community voices, but the responsibility for opinions rests with their authors.