

County Board approves loans to Granite City and Venice for improvements

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EDWARDSVILLE, February 19, 2015 – The Madison County Board approved an infrastructure loan to the City of Granite City and a recreation loan to the Venice Park District at its February meeting.

The \$300,000 loan to Granite City will be used by the city as part of the costs associated with street and sidewalk repairs around the Granite City Regional Medical Center, and for the demolition of a vacant building which formerly housed the Elk's Lodge and is located adjacent to City Hall.

The three percent, seven-year loan will be made from the Madison County Community Development's Revolving Loan Program and will be secured by a General Obligation Ordinance adopted by the Granite City and repaid by the city's Tax Increment Financing funds.

Madison County Chairman Alan J. Dunstan said the loan to Granite City addresses a public health and safety

Dunstan said the demolition of the old Elk's Lodge not only removes a potential safety hazard, but supports the efforts of Granite City Mayor Ed Hagnauer and the city council to renovate the downtown area. "Mayor Hagnauer and the city council have worked diligently on the renovation of downtown Granite City. The demolition of the old Elk's Lodge is part of those efforts."

The \$400,000 loan to the Venice Park District is for improvements to Lee Park, including a Tot Lot play area, the installation of exercise stations, the construction of a walking trail and new pavilion, and the addition of modular public restrooms. Aesthetic improvements to the park will also be made, including the planting of trees and the removal of a dangerous waterslide.

"The residents of Venice have limited recreational facilities," Dunstan said. "For years, Lee Park has had an important, viable role in the lives of Venice residents. The planned improvements will once again make Lee Park a popular destination for residents of all ages. This loan is an excellent example of how Madison County Park and Recreational grants can be used to benefit our residents and improve areas of our county."

Frank Miles, administrator of Madison County Community Development, said the Madison County Park and Recreation Commission and Grants Committee established the low interest, revolving loan fund from the 1/10th percent sales tax devoted to recreation projects. "The sales tax was approved by voters under the Illinois Metro-East Park and Recreation District Act and is administered in Madison County by the Community Development department," Miles said. "Since the fund was established, the funds have been used to improve parks and recreational facilities in virtually every area of Madison County."

Miles said Madison County residents benefit in many ways from the efforts of the Park and Recreation Commission, as well as the extensive system of bike and walking paths constructed and managed by Madison County Transit. "As a result of the many, excellent parks and recreational facilities, and the system of bike and walking paths, people from throughout the greater St. Louis area are coming to Madison County."

"And while they are here, they are spending money at restaurants, shops and other businesses," added Miles. "Without question the parks, recreational facilities and bike paths in Madison County have a positive economic impact."

The Venice Park District will repay the three percent, five-year loan from funds received from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Metro East Park

District. The loan will be secured from a General Obligation ordinance passed by the park district.

The renovation of Lee Park will be managed by the staff of America's Central Port. The Port's staff will perform contractor site inspections and will review and make recommendations to the Venice Park District for all pay requests.