

Lion's Club/Wittman Parks Receives Huge Boost With Receipt of \$600,000 In IDNR Grant, Other Funds

by Bob Manns
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JERSEYVILLE - As part of the City's long-term Capital Improvement Plan, increased recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages are a key priority. The Lion's Club/Wittman Park complex is centrally located within Jerseyville, and has a

variety of current offerings from playground equipment to picnic shelters to a walking trail.

The City Council recognized the need to add new amenities to be enjoyed for many years to come. The first phase of the park's transformation was completed last year – the NFC outdoor fitness court, three new pickleball courts, rehab of two basketball courts, parking/sidewalk/drainage upgrades, landscaping improvements, and related lighting and security improvements.

Recently, the City received a huge boost to the next phase of its planned improvements at Lion's Club/Wittman Parks, with the receipt of \$600,000 in grant funding from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' FY 2023 Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) highly competitive grant program. Along with another \$250,000 in grant funding received last year from the Illinois-American Water Company Charitable Foundation Grant Program, and the City's recent commitment of ARP funding, the next phase of improvements will become a reality. The project is planned to include a splash pad, bathhouse with open air pavilion, sand volleyball courts, outdoor ping pong and cornhole, lighting and fencing, and related site improvements.

According to Zach Crawford, Commissioner of Public Property “the City has received lots of interest from residents about adding a splash pad to our community. Our persistence has paid off, and these grant dollars will allow us to move forward with this new amenity, targeting the younger kids. The restroom and concession facility will not only be utilized for the splash pad, but will also be convenient for the basketball and pickleball courts. We will continue to look for ways to improve outdoor recreation opportunities for all ages.”

This is a positive time for parks and recreation, as the City will also be opening bids for improvements to the Susnig complex this week, which has now been in use for over 40 years. A \$450,000 grant obtained last year from the IDNR PARC program, another \$100,000 in DCEO grant funding, as well as private donations, paved the way for a new gym flooring system, new ADA-compliant bleachers, retractable batting nets, new restroom facilities, replacement roof system, and other features at the Susnig complex.

Kevin Stork, Commissioner of Accounts and Finance added “our capital improvement program touches all areas of the City, from downtown re-development to infrastructure needs to parks and recreation. Our long-range planning efforts and our vision for the future allow the City, and more importantly it's employees, to have a plan to execute on a day-to-day basis. The new features added at the parks have provided outdoor fitness opportunities for all ages. We have also witnessed increased economic development through use of City facilities by visitors, as well as hosting tournaments. This helps our

local businesses while also providing the City with increased sales tax revenue. The use of grant funding enables our limited City tax dollars to go much further, as the costs of improvements continues to rise dramatically.”

The City Council meets every two weeks throughout the year, and consists of Mayor William Russell, and Commissioners Nick Bexheti, Zach Crawford, Steve Pohlman, and Kevin Stork.