

City of Alton comes to rescue of Morrison's Irish Pub, other businesses with pump, barrier

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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Morrison's Irish Pub had water about an inch from the floor inside of the business on Tuesday afternoon, but a quick-thinking Alton Public Works director and employees came to the rescue.

The Public Works employees completed installation of barriers and sandbags at the corner of State and Broadway on Tuesday evening, as a precautionary measure to protect Morrison's Irish Pub and other close businesses.

Mary Vankirk, one of the business owners with Lisa Morrison, smiled and said, "The city stepped in and saved our floor. We are so grateful. Everything they have done is helping. We rented some pumps and they brought the bigger pump in to help. We had about an inch to go."

Morrison's Irish Pub was going to have a soft opening of its business at the bottom of State in Alton soon, but the high waters have prevented that from happening. The owners now hope by July 24 to have the business open.

Alton Public Works Director Bob Barnhart and Alton Mayor Brant Walker were both pleased with the work of the department in this situation that was becoming trying for businesses near the spilled-out Mississippi River water.

"We wanted to make sure we were prepared for anything that would come our way," Barnhart said. "We have about a 70-foot barrier in place and we can add to the north and south if we need to add anything."

Walker said this is the third flood in his two-year administration and he said the Alton Public Works Department is experienced in handling these types of situations.

"We have some highly skilled people in the Public Works Department," he said. "They did a phenomenal job today working to preserve the nearby businesses."

Mississippi River levels at Mel Price Lock And Dam in Alton stood at 32.11 feet at 10 a.m. on Tuesday with a flood stage of 21 feet. Levels appear to be dropping, but there is rain in forecast for the next several days.

Public Works employees positioned plastic down first in creating the protection for the businesses, followed by sand, then the barriers and bags of sand.

Van Kirk said she knew it was possible that Morrison's would flood at some time, but she and her partner didn't expect it to happen so soon.

“The water just kept creeping up,” she said. “It was right below the floor joists before the city came in and helped.”

