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## City approves transfer of \$1 million from roads, paving funds to Parks and Recreation

roads and infrastructure repair.

"I want to explain this as we move forward, so we can understand," Mayor Phil Fisher said. "As you know, for years we have been striving to get \$1 million to put in our street paving budget. And, as you know, we have achieved that."

The \$1 million in the street paving budget was earmarked for work that needs to be done, whether it be paving or milling or whatever has to be done, Fisher explained. "Having reached that goal and in discussion with Rep. Philip A. Gunn, he gave the City an additional \$1 million." Gunn stipulated the \$1 million be used for street paving.

"Since that freed up [\$1 million] street paving money we already had, I'm asking for the Board to use the money [from the legislature] for street paving, and take the money currently budgeted for street paving and move it to a different account for park improvements," Fisher said. He asked that \$800,000 be used for park improvements, with \$200,000 in an account as match money for park improvements.

The Board voted 7-0 to accept the \$1 million from the legislature; however, in discussion about the \$1 million of the City's money being moved to Parks and Recreation, Ward 2 Alderman Jim Martin questioned the feasibility of using funds earmarked for road repairs and infrastructure to Parks and Recreation.

"At a federal level, all states are begging and pleading for help with roads, bridges and infrastructure. Our legislature has been working hard in the past few years to help us," Martin said. "What we have been asking the legislature for is because we are so far behind [in repairs] that we need the legislature to help us out. Again, that's great, but what we are doing is looking at a proposal here to take our \$1 million to put on something else."

Martin said that the idea of asking the legislature for the money was to catch up on street paving. "Not a week goes by that somebody doesn't ask me when their street will be paved...I envision legislators are helping us catch up, but we aren't doing that. I've got real concerns that we're not catching up on street paving, which is what the intent of the \$1 million given to us."

"Street paving is not the only issue we face in the city of Clinton," Ward 3 Alderman William O. Barnett said.



"Parks and Recreation is taking a beating. Other departments are taking a beating. We need money for parks. I don't think the legislature will be concerned about where we spend the money."

"We asked to get help from citizens and the legislature," Ward 4 Alderman Keith Perritt said. "The City of Clinton stepped up, and so did they [the legislature]. Those parks are vital to Clinton, as are the streets we drive on, too."

The motion to approve transferring the \$1 million from the repair fund to Parks and Recreation passed 6-1. Martin was the dissenting vote.

Taxpayers will also get a reduction in millage because of the money from the legislature.

"This board will reduce, as promised, taxes by the amount of money we received from the legislature from the special session, which should have

been twenty-five percent of \$630,000. We will use that money and reduce the tax increase that we had a few years ago by the same amount of money, so you will see a reduction in your millage next year," Mayor Phil Fisher said. "As that builds over the next four years, or actually it builds until the end of this administration, then we'll vote to do away with that, as promised to you."

Of the \$1 million given to Parks and Recreation, \$800,000 will be used to accomplish two main projects, according to Parks and Recreation Director Adam Wade.

"We will replace all fencing on the baseball and softball fields," Wade said. Last year, with the help of the Clinton girls' softball association, all four backstops were replaced on the softball fields.

"We would also like to replace the softball concession stand; it has very

bad foundation issues and is not safe," Wade said. "We plan to replace the bathrooms and make the area nice."

"A key factor is that bidding is coming up for the NJCAA tournament again in October." By making the improvements to the field, Clinton Parks and Recreation would be in a better position to get the bid for the tournament in the future, Wade said. "It is also good to provide a quality facility for citizens in Clinton and bring in tournaments on weekends," Wade said.

Other improvements planned with the \$800,000 include a dog park at Kids Towne Park, as well as improvements at Northside Park, Robinson Park and an additional bathroom facility at Traceway Park.

"The work will touch about every park we have," Wade said.

The additional \$200,000 will be held in a match fund to be used for future City park improvements.

In addition to the \$1 million the City received for street paving, another \$500,000 was received from Speaker Philip Gunn and the legislature to be added to the account for the Clinton Parkway repair/resurfacing project. The Board accepted the low bid from W.E. Blain & Sons for \$1,145,457.45 related to the 2019 Transportation Improvements Project for the Clinton Parkway.

Ward 6 Alderman Mike Cashion asked why there was a \$400,000 difference (reduction) between the original bid, which was rejected by the City because the bid was too high, and the latest round of bids. Consulting City Engineer Bill Owen said the difference was because of the price of asphalt. He also speculated that, because there was more competition with three bids for the project, and that one of the bidders was between projects, that the construction company (W.E. Blain & Sons) was "through with other work and ready to do this work."

Owen recommended awarding W.E. Blain & Sons the project, and the Board approved with a vote of 7-0.

As recommended by Owen, the Board also approved advertising for bids for the 2019 Street Paving Improvements Project. The Street Paving Improvement projects, which will be advertised and bids accepted June 20, will encompass 3.8 miles total for paving, repair, and pavement markings, Owen said.



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