

# Public input requested for fund allocations for Lions Club Park vs. paving

By Ward 2 Alderman Jim Martin

City leaders have advocated for open and transparent government. I want to ensure that the process with the Lions Club Park, Traceway and Kid's Towns parks and street paving is open and transparent.



In 2016, a goal was approved regarding street paving, for which funds had not been available for several years. The goal was to reach a position to pave one-tenth of the streets each year. This goal was based on the average 10-year life of a street. If one-tenth of the streets were paved every year, we would not have street paving issues. Since some streets may have longer or shorter lives, there was some flexibility, once all streets were in good shape.

Since 2016, the budget for street paving has increased. In 2018, taxes were raised to increase the street paving budget amount to \$1 million. This tax increase was to be temporary, until additional funding was provided by the State. With the internet sales tax diversion, this tax increase is to be reduced over the next couple of years, based on the amounts received. I had hoped, and so voted, that the tax increase was not needed, relying on anticipated, although not guaranteed, street paving assistance from the State and Hinds County.

In 2018, Hinds County provided street paving valued at \$1.5 million. Hinds County paved, rather than providing funds to the City, Springridge Road, Clinton-Raymond Road, part of College Street, Clinton-Tinnin Road, Cynthia Road and Neal Street. The State provided \$1 million, which was used on three road projects needing infrastructure repair. The City-budgeted amount of \$1 million was used for street paving. The City budget included \$500,000 for the City portion of the repair and repaving of Clinton Parkway, which carried over into 2019, since that work was delayed.

The 2019 City budget included \$1 million for street paving and the carried over \$500,000 for the Parkway. The Legislature graciously provided \$500,000 for use on the Parkway project and \$1 million for infrastructure and street paving. The City, therefore, had \$3 million for street paving.

At the May 7, 2019, Board of Aldermen meeting, three matters



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concerning street paving were considered. The \$500,000 provided by the Legislature to assist with repairs and re-paving of the Clinton Parkway was unanimously accepted and, by a 6-1 vote, then removed the \$500,000 previously in the budget for the Parkway and allocated \$410,000 to Lions Club Park.

Secondly, the \$1 million provided by the Legislature to assist with re-paving Clinton streets was unanimously accepted and, by a 6-1 vote, then removed the \$1 million previously in the budget for street paving and allocated it for repairs and improvements to baseball/softball facilities at Traceway Park and a Kids' Towne Dog Park.

Third, advertising was unanimously approved for bids for the 2019 street paving of the streets most needing re-paving, within the estimated costs of the \$1 million in the budget for street paving. The list included paving 6.8 miles of streets.

Clinton has approximately 187.5 miles of streets to maintain. Approximately 30.5 miles of streets are State Aid eligible roads (such as Highway 80 and Northside Drive) for which the State can maintain, although City matching funds are sometimes required. Therefore, 157 miles of streets are the sole responsibility of the City.

In 2016, 4.53 miles of city streets were paved. In 2017, 2.7 miles were paved. In 2018, 13.6 miles were paved by the City, and 4.46 miles were paved by Hinds County. 6.83 miles are scheduled to be paved in 2019, plus 2.2 miles of the Parkway. Therefore, from 2016 to 2019, 34.32 miles of the 157 miles were, or are to be, paved.

In 2017, Mississippi College sold the Lions Club Park property

to Chartre Consulting, LLC for an apartment/retail complex. Chartre initially proposed to pay all costs to relocate the Park. After checking on the price of playground equipment, Chartre said that they would provide \$100,000 toward the park. Additional funds would need to be raised from other sources.

In February 2019, Chartre proposed to donate \$38,000, provide engineers to oversee construction, provide site prep work and perpetually maintain the park as a part of tax incremental financing (TIF) assistance from the City. After the TIF was denied, it was disclosed that Chartre would not provide the engineering services, the site work or perpetual maintenance without the TIF. The \$38,000 apparently had already been paid.

Funds raised for the park included Chartre \$38,000, Lions Club International \$100,000, Clinton Lions Club \$15,000, Mississippi College \$30,000, Leland Speed \$30,000, Main Street Clinton \$14,000, Chamber of Commerce \$1,000, Jr. Civic League \$30,000, donations from Caterpillar Parade \$120, for a total of \$258,120. Plans for the park continued to expand. As previously mentioned, \$410,000 of Parkway street funds were diverted to the park, thus increasing the total to \$668,120.

The plans for the park continued to expand by adding restrooms and a pavilion. Additional funds were needed. At the June 18, 2019, Board of Aldermen meeting, \$370,000 of funds were transferred to the Park. The \$370,000 funds were leftover funds in the Pinehaven Road and Hampstead Boulevard road projects.

Lions Club Park has gone from a \$100,000 park to a \$258,120

park to a \$668,120 park to now a \$1,038,120 park, with the City providing \$780,000 transferred from street accounts to the park.

On June 4, 2019, the City agreed to borrow \$140,000 for repairs to the driveway at the new Fire Station on Pinehaven Drive. On June 18, 2019, the City agreed to borrow \$250,000 for adding restroom facilities to Robinson Park and Northside Park and repairing restrooms at Traceway Park. Funds were borrowed for these projects, while funds were shifted from street projects for Lions Club Park. The total funds shifted from street paving to parks is \$1,780,000, with \$780,000 to Lions Club Park and \$1 million to Traceway and Kid's Towne parks.

There is no question that a \$1 million Lions Club Park will be nice. Improvements to Traceway and Kid's Towne parks are needed. There is no question that the condition of our streets is critical. The perpetual issue for government is how best to allocate the resources (budget income) that it receives. The purpose of this article is to ensure that we are open and transparent with the resources available.

It is anticipated that a vote will occur at the August 6, 2019, Board of Aldermen meeting on whether to award the construction contract for the Lions Club Park. Consideration of contracts for the Traceway and Kid's Towne projects will occur later. I welcome input from residents in Ward 2 and from everyone in the City on whether to continue with these projects or to shift the funds back to street paving. I believe that other Aldermen/women likewise welcome input. Telephone and email addresses are available on the City website.