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# City's Goals And Plans Keep Moving Forward

By Michael Stein

Some things that were bubbling to the surface a year ago in Barnesville became more evident in 2018. From new residential lots to park enhancements to commercial developments, 2018 was a pretty good year for the city.

From the perspective of City Hall, a number of changes should keep that forward momentum going strong in 2019.

"We made a number of changes with the firms we contract with for city services," said City Administrator Mike Rietz. "Those were very positive and exciting moves, with the goal of continuing to improve service to our residents."

In 2018, the City of Barnesville switched from Otter Tail Power to Missouri River Energy Service, which will provide services in operating and maintaining the city's electrical distribution system. Street and property maintenance is now being done by Northwest Services. Moore Engineering is now providing engineering service and consultation.

"We had been with Otter Tail for 15 years, and our contract with them had expired," Rietz said. "Our goals no longer fit with their business model, so we switched to MRES. They'll provide more staffing hours and allow the city to be more proactive in our maintenance practices."

Rietz added that Northwest Services will add some additional skills for installation and repair of



Two 40-panel solar arrays were launched for purchase by Barnesville residents in 2018 with the goal of saving money in the long term on utility bills.

equipment.

The city also hired Don Williams to replace Trevor Moen as public works superintendent.

The city will continue its efforts to annex and pave the remainder of 13th Street.

"We'll be completing the annexation process this year, which

will turn the south section from a township road to a city street," Rietz said. "We anticipate getting it paved in 2020. From there we'll take over maintenance of that section."

Another piece of that project will be determine how much might be paid by special assessments. The city will also be studying walking/hiking trails along 13th Street.

The commercial condo units planned at the commercial park will be on of the most noticeable changes in the landscape.

The condo units will provide space for small service businesses, such as plumbing and electric. A single unit could also be used for business or residential storage.

"The commercial condo concept is something we've seen in other cities," Rietz said. "And we've had some good interest in it so far."

The City of Barnesville is gearing up for reconstruction of Front Street from Main Avenue to Highway 9, which is a Minnesota Department of Transportation project planned for 2023.

The project includes water and sewer utility replacement.

"We have some fairly undersized sewer and water utilities in that part of Front Street," Rietz said. "This will be a great chance to replace those."

Barnesville is also teaming up with the Partnership for Health to help out with planning improvements

to Front Street, one of those being opportunities for trails and paths. The broad plan includes potential

connection with other trails in the area.

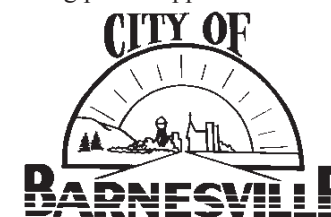
In 2018, the city completed an online reservation system at Wagner Campground. Campers will go online to purchase a site, which, Rietz said, gives the city the ability to monitor the occupancy rate on a real-time basis.

"We're close to looking at the possible expansion of the campground," Rietz said. "The numbers continue to increase. During the season last year, it was full just about every weekend."

A year's worth of work and preparation came to fruition in October 2018 when the city's solar garden was officially opened.

With two arrays of 40 panels each, residents are able to purchase a panel with the objective of saving money on their electrical bill.

The past year also saw a revision of the City of Barnesville web site. The new design has made it more interactive. For example, users will be able to download forms like a building permit application.



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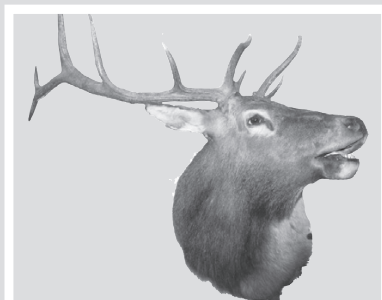
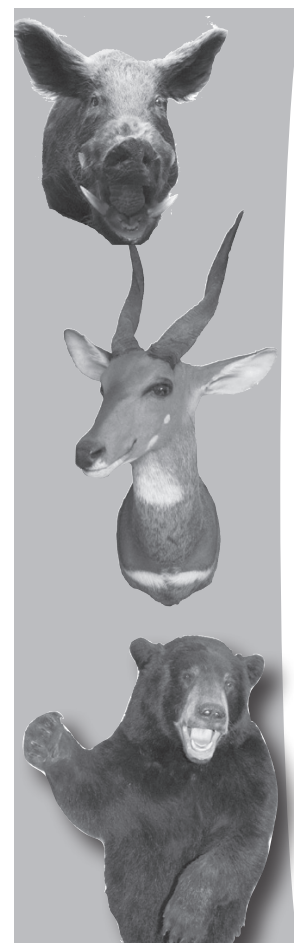
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A number of public meetings were held in 2018 to present plans and receive input for a proposed trail system through the area.



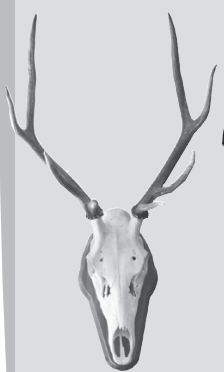
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