

A bizarre bazaar at St. Rose Church



Former MLB star to talk at town hall



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Dam modifications back for discussion at City Hall

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

The city of Wilmington continues to look ahead on plans for the Kankakee River Dam, starting with the approval of an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with Will County related to one half million dollars in American Rescue Plan grant funds set aside for grant modification.

Wilmington was one of 37 agencies in Will County selected to receive a share of \$43 million from Will County in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars for infrastructure updates, payroll assistance, and health and well being programs. Of that funding, which was announced

on May 18, \$15.9 million is specifically reserved for infrastructure improvements such as the dam. The funds are earmarked for removal of the hydraulic roller and installation of a rock ramp to decrease turbidity to address life and safety at the dam on the Kankakee River.

A 2017 study conducted by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) that compared the costs of changes at the dam, those funds, while helpful, will only extend so far.

At that time, options for modification of the dam would cost the city between \$3 million to \$4 million to complete. But the latest price tag is now \$5.76 million, according to the

staff report reviewed by the committee last week.

ARPA allocations for infrastructure improvements were capped at \$500,000, meaning Wilmington will receive the highest amount available for this type of project.

The IDNR gave a presentation to members of the public two years ago exploring the options for the dam, which the state has deemed one of the most dangerous dams in Illinois.

If the city were to opt for complete removal of the dam, the state would cover that cost completely.

But, despite a public survey issued more than two years ago that indicated there was support for removal, the most prominent vocal

opinions, both at that 2021 meeting and via social media, have been in support for safety modifications or to simply leave the dam alone.

However, city leaders have been hesitant to do nothing. At least 15 people have died after getting caught in the hydraulic roller at the dam over the past 40 years.

Over the past two decades, the city has been sued as a responsible party in the deaths of six drowning victims, and has been successfully sued in at least three wrongful death cases.

The city's liability coverage related to incidents at the dam was limited to \$500,000 in 2018.

With the \$500,000 award from

Will County on hand, the city has been reaching out to state, IDNR, and other agencies to seek out funding for modification.

City Administrator Jeannine Smith said so far, in addition to the \$500,000 grant, the city hopes to secure \$750,000 in state legislative member initiatives, and \$2.1 million from the IDNR, leaving nearly \$2.4 million left for the city to cover.

"It would be a rock ramp," Smith told the Committee of the Whole on Aug. 8 of the current modification plans. "The ramp would be created over the existing dam in front of it, it would take the boil out the dam."

SEE DAM, PAGE 2

Smoothing things downtown



Photo by Eric Fisher

IT WAS A WELCOME SIGHT Tuesday morning to see Gallagher Materials in the heart of downtown Wilmington removing blacktop in preparation for a new paving surface. After a rain delay the project got started a week behind schedule and is expected to be completed by the end of the week

Wilmington or Oz?



Photo by Marney Simon

PHOTOS OF THIS DOUBLE RAINBOW showed up all over social media on Monday, Aug. 14. The full colorful arc was visible all throughout Wilmington around 6:30 p.m., as bright sunshine and a drenching downpour battled outside. This shot was taken at Wilmington High School. According to the National Weather Service, the area's 24-hour rainfall totals as of Tuesday morning were just over one-half inch.

SIS project slated for on-time completion

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

The 2023-2024 school year is underway at most districts across the region.

But, students in Wilmington 209-U remain at home for a few more weeks, as the district finishes with work at Stevens Intermediate School.

During the Aug. 14 regular monthly meeting of the Board of Education, district officials reported that the overhaul at

SIS was substantially complete, and the school will be ready to open at the start of the school year.

The 13-week project involved several weeks of asbestos abatement prior to replacing the HVAC and chiller systems, as well as new piping, vents, rooftop units, digital controls, lighting, fresh paint, and flooring. The district also upgraded some of the equipment in the kitchen, as well as

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Comprehensive plan proposals will move to P&Z Commission

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

Long term planning continues to be one of the items at the top of the agenda for the Wilmington City Council.

On Aug. 8, the members of the Committee of the Whole held a discussion regarding two request for qualification (RFQ) submissions received to create a comprehensive plan and a master parks plan for the islands.

The city had planned to budget \$100,000 for creation of a plan, however, initial submissions were much higher. Since then, the city has reached out to other firms on ways to make the planning more cost effective, including

some paring down of services or pulling apart the comprehensive plan and the parks plan as two separate pieces.

The committee took a look at two proposals showing potential for park planning that could incorporate preliminary plans for the islands that were discussed more than 10 years ago, which included a drawing of improvements such as a trail through both islands and upgraded park equipment.

City Administrator Jeannine Smith said a proposal from the firm Confluence would cost approximately \$100,000 plus \$10,000 in expenses, while a second proposal from Egret & Ox Planning currently prices out

at \$116,000 for the comprehensive plan plus \$16,000 for additional components with the parks.

Smith said the proposals would also include a public comment component.

The city's current comprehensive plan, which was last updated and approved by the City Council in 2008, is designed to serve as a guiding document for policy decisions when it comes to development planning, including land use, transportation, and design.

The 2008 plan included 16 outlined goals and objectives, much of which centered around increasing residential and business growth and updating infrastructure while

preserving the city's historic areas and small town charm.

But, that plan is already woefully out of date, and does not include annexed properties and currently industrial expansion, such as the Elion Logistics Park.

"We're at a point where we have to do something, we have to go through the process," Smith said of creating a new comprehensive plan. "There's no penalty if you don't, but you kind of penalize yourselves if you don't have a plan to fall back on. I'll give you a good example: I received an email from the county. There's a company that wants to come in and

SEE PLAN, PAGE 2

Police, fire to share drone

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

The Wilmington Police Department will create a drone program to assist with law enforcement and safety operations within the city limits.

During the Aug. 8 meeting of the Committee of the Whole meeting, Police Chief Adam Zink presented a request for the purchase of a drone.

Zink told that committee that the purchase will assist

the department in preventing and addressing issues, including violent crime at highly attended events, such as parades and festivals. Zink said the current trend for first responders is the addition of unmanned aircraft, such as drones.

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