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ALERT FEATURED

Park partnership: Public works, sanitary authority join forces to save city \$25K at Wengler Park

By QUINN SCHWARTZ Herald Staff Writer Apr 6, 2019

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Don Bernard, of the Sharon Sanitary Authority, uses a backhoe to remove a sidewalk along Carnegie Avenue, which wrapped around the old Wengler Elementary School.

SHARON – A wrinkle in the project to revitalize the area around Wengler Park could end up saving Sharon taxpayers almost \$25,000.

Economic Development Director Melissa Philips said the city Public Works Department joined with Sharon Sanitary Authority in a collaborative effort to remove deteriorating sidewalk surrounding an empty lot adjacent to Wengler Park. Work is currently under way in the area of the now-closed Wengler Elementary School.

The city planned to spend \$90,000, funded through two grants, on the project.

Sharon Council recently awarded a contract to J&T Paving of Greenville for \$65,175, which would pay for reshaping the existing property and some minimal land grading.

Greer Hayden, of Sharon-based HHS DR Architects/Engineers, said crews would bring in at least four inches of topsoil and seed and plant low-maintenance trees along the park's perimeter.

City officials also solicited two alternate bids to remove the sidewalks, but those came in more than \$100,000 over budget.

“The current sidewalk is in fair condition overall, although certain sections are in severe disrepair,” Phillips said. “The city does not have current funding for its replacement, and it is unlikely there will be funding for replacement in the future.”

Without funding to replace the sidewalks, Phillips said the city was left with the choice of either leaving the deteriorating sidewalk in place without a future maintenance plan, or removing the existing sidewalk completely.

“I recommended the latter solution for the primary reason that removing the sidewalk at the present time will allow for proper grading and seeding of the property, and offer the most usable space for pedestrians,” Phillips said.

Once the sidewalk is removed, Phillips said the trenches left behind will be filled and planted with grass with the project's remaining funding. She said curbs surrounding the Wengler lot will be replaced as needed and curb ramp improvements will be evaluated with consideration for those with accessibility issues.

J&T Paving of Greenville submitted an informal quote of \$25,000 to remove the sidewalk. But city officials reached out to the Sanitary Authority Director Guy Cunningham and he agreed to use a backhoe already owned by the authority to remove the sidewalk for the city.

“This is a big project for the city,” Cunningham said. “We’re always willing to work with them.”

City trucks will haul away the debris, Cunningham said manpower will be the only main cost.

Cunningham said the sidewalk removal was scheduled to finish Thursday, and he expects the entire project to be completed by late spring.

“Once it gets going it will move pretty quickly,” Phillips said.

Wengler Elementary School stood on the site from the 1920s until it was demolished in 2015.

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