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FEATURED

Sharon ready to develop site of former Wengler School

By QUINN SCHWARTZ Herald Staff Writer Mar 10, 2019



CORY BYKNISH | Herald

Sharon will soon begin work on a park project to help revive the area of the former Wengler Elementary School. Plans include adding at least four inches of topsoil, which will be seeded and planted with low-maintenance trees along the perimeter.



SHARON – The city is almost set to begin work on a park project to help revive the area of the former Wengler Elementary School.

During Wednesday's city council meeting, Greer Hayden, of HHSDR Architects/Engineers, Sharon, presented council with preliminary drawings for the project, which includes reshaping the existing property and doing some minimal land grading. Greer said at least four inches of topsoil would be brought in, seeded and planted with low-maintenance trees along the park's perimeter.

"Now it will be a grassy area where kids can actually play, versus now, which is just a rocky environment where no one can go," Community and Economic Development Director Melissa Phillips said.

The project has a \$97,000 budget, and was initiated roughly four years ago by former Community and Economic Development Director Janet Thomas. The original grant for the project was worth \$57,000 with a \$15,000 match from the city, but Phillips said the city was able to chip in an additional \$25,000 after realizing some costs that were not written into the grant.

The city opened three base bids for the project, with the lowest offer coming from J&T Paving of Greenville, in the amount of \$65,175.

Two alternate bids were also solicited to deal with sidewalks and curbing along Wengler and Park streets, as well replacing the walks along Clover Street and Carnegie Avenue. Phillips said the alternate bids came in significantly higher than expected, but said additional funding for the sidewalks and curbing could be revisited at a later date.

Some in attendance, including Sharon Code Officer Dave Tomko, implored council to scrap the plan to plant trees and leave the area as only a grassy field.

"Growing up in that area and coaching Little League and midget football, I know there has never really been a green space for kids wanting to play," Tomko said. "Leave it green, don't plant anything else, and see what happens over time. ... Once you plant trees and all that stuff you've killed it for the kids to play."

Council assured him that the trees would be limited to the perimeter of the park.

"Every single thing you're mentioning, we've talked about while planning this over the past four years," Councilwoman Molly Bundrant said. "We've done so much investigating and talking and planning, and I think it will be able to be used for what you are talking about. It should be a nice open field other than a few trees to provide shade."

The grant funding expires on June 30. Phillips said the project is expected to be finished by May 31.

“Once (the bid is awarded), work can begin right away,” she said. “There isn’t much time left before we lose the grant.”

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

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