

No Standing News

Since we have no standing, we stand with those left standing

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The Lions are busy as beavers

By Lois Ann Marler

Kudos to the Rolla Lions Club!* They are near completion of a 3,200 ft. walking trail that cost approximately \$16,000. The trail, aptly named the "Walk around the Lake", winds completely around the lake, has no hills, and is easily accessible from any spot in the park. No public funds were used for construction, and nearly all the labor was voluntary. They have truly earned the title of a "benevolent" non-profit organization, and have demonstrated exemplary stewardship.

Our city could take a few lessons from the Lions. Not only have our parks been neglected, I suspect the neglect has been intentional. We pay a park tax, but what are we getting from the city in comparison to what the Lions provide?

To begin with, free pavilion reservations. The Lions have 7 pavilions, all with a water spigot. The charge? Nothing. The city has no more than two pavilions at any park. The charge? \$16 per day. Some parks don't even have water!

And speaking of water, does anyone care that the Optimist Club Soccer kids are working up a sweat at Buehler Park with no water to drink? A water fountain was promised for this fall, but was cut from the budget. Too bad kids, bring your own Gatorade.

What about playground equipment? The Lions have more pieces of equipment than any single park

owned by the city. The merry-go-round in Buehler Park was removed earlier this summer for repairs, or so I was told by Mitch Lewis of the Parks Department. I was informed on 10-19-98 by Parks Director Ken Kwantes that the merry-go-round "is not slated for replacement". It supposedly doesn't pass Consumer Product Safety Commission requirements, and will not be replaced with anything. Lions Club park has two merry-go-rounds, one which is very similar to the one removed from Buehler.

Lions Club park is well groomed. I spoke to one of the grounds-keepers this year. She said she knows every tree, every turn, and takes great pride in maintaining the park. Ber Juan Park is a perfect example of a lack of pride in grounds maintenance. Every year the city leaves several acres unmowed, creating a less-than-tidy appearance. Why? Maybe there are some bunny families that live there, who knows?

Okay, enough criticism. I have a solution to the problem, be it ever so controversial. Let's deed all the city park land to the Lions. They have shown that they can get a lot done with a limited budget. They take pride in their work. Maybe then we could have water in all the parks, replacement equipment when something breaks, and free pavilion reservations.

Just think of all the money the city would save! To start with, Kwantes' salary of \$48,814, along with the salaries of Mitch Lewis, Stan Busch, Kristie Bullock and the other full-time park department employees comes to \$172,931. That's well over what the park tax even generates! The Lions have a wonderful fleet of volunteers who could do secretarial work, administrative responsibilities,

along with all the maintenance. The city would save the \$300,000 from the general fund that subsidizes the park tax. Give the park tax to the Lions!

Can't do that, you say? It's against the law? Let's back up and look at the precedent the city has already set. At the October 1998 Council meeting, the city extended the silver platter to the Rolla Community Development Corporation (RCDC). What was on the platter? Sixty acres of land. It violates the Missouri Constitution to grant land or money to a private corporation. The RCDC can find a buyer for the land, but they can't actually own it. Our city administrator must be aware of this, but it's hard to tell the council they can't do something. It might cost you your job.

Another example is the blunder on the west-end of town. The Rolla Area Chamber of Commerce, a non-profit "benevolent" organization, is the recipient of an expected \$4 million of public funds. Are these funds going back into the community to help us local folks? It's questionable. All I seem to hear is that travelers are coming off of I-44 looking for a bathroom and Branson tickets, both of which are available at OUR Visitors' Center. I wonder if Branson is reciprocating the favor and pointing travelers in our direction! If the motel tax is helping anyone, it's the Chamber, and fast food row. Are we getting a good return on the four million? I think you know the answer to that one.

Perhaps the Lions Club would like the Visitors' Center, as well. They would probably do a better job at paying off the loan than the Chamber has. The Chamber has essentially been trading water, paying only interest to the three banks who wrote this questionable loan.

Would the Lions Club be interested in land or tax revenue? Probably not. They run a very professional and ethical ship. They realize that the one who provides for you is also your gatekeeper. It was just a thought.

*Among other recent contributions to our community, the Lions have been providing free hearing tests, encouraging citizens to sign eye donor cards, expanding and refurbishing Lions Memorial Field at the high school, and donating \$14,000 in scholarships. Whew! What a group!

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