

# No Standing News

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

Volume I

Number 71

November 3, 2000

## MORE RECREATIONAL COMPLEXITIES

Recently, the Rolla City Council was taken on an imaginary "helicopter" ride over the city during their retreat on economic development. What Rolla's park patrons need is a helicopter ride for a bird's-eye view of the park situation. So climb on board; we'll show you some interesting sights.

**Stop #1: Southview Park.** Many taxpayers are getting a fresh glimpse of one of the busiest parks in town: Southview Park. Now that Phase II of the Acorn Trail has opened, walkers and bikers are passing by Southview and probably don't even know it. Just south of Casey's General Store (where Southview Drive will eventually connect with Winchester) is Southview Park. This 27-acre "park" is the city's prime dump spot for old asphalt, dirt and construction debris, which has recently been bulldozed to the south end of the park. Interesting primitive vegetation abounds in this uniquely "landscaped" garden. (Why spend millions on a landfill in Washington County when we have a dump right in the middle of town?)

A few weeks ago residents in an adjacent neighborhood lobbied the council for "Children at Play" signs on streets in their neighborhood. Children in the Cambridge, Oxford and Norwich neighborhood have no developed park to play in. Are these neighbors of Southview "Park" aware that their city

finds a 27-acre undeveloped park more suitable for a dump?

**Stop #2: Coventry Park.** Now let's zoom over to 13-acre Coventry park, a typical "flood plain" park south of Soest Road. At the September 5, 2000, council meeting, it was revealed (in open session) that the council had deposited money toward the purchase of 3.3 adjacent acres to expand this park. The council had already deposited \$4000 in the non-refundable account toward the \$18,000 purchase price. They voted unanimously to buy the property.

The reason for the interest in the land was due to the POSSIBLE need to purchase replacement parkland if the rec center went in Ber Juan Park. The council received an administrative amendment to the 6(f) conversion requirement and doesn't need to purchase replacement land after all. It is interesting to note, however, that the 3.3 acre tract is worth half of what the Ber Juan property had been appraised for (\$30,000), and was not as much acreage. It would not have been an equal replacement. It was simply a shot in the dark to appease DNR if they needed to.

**Stop #3: Ber Juan Park.** We could hover here until the copter ran out of gas. The old pond at Ber Juan was breached and drained BEFORE bids on the new retention pond and dam had been received. The council suffered collective shock when the bids came back \$100,000 over the latest estimate.

The council debated over which account, rec center or capital improvements, would be tapped for the pond project. Some argued that, since it will help

downstream flooding (which is a real, ongoing problem) some of the project should be paid for with capital improvement (street) funds. It was finally decided that \$90,000 of the project (the original estimate for the entire dam project) would be funded with rec center dollars, and the remaining 110,000+ would come out of street funds over a period of 3-4 years.

There is now concern that future bids on the rec center will be higher than expected, too. This is a valid concern. With higher fuel costs and our current full-employment economy, the cost of building the rec center will undoubtedly be much higher now than a year ago. According to the city's own recreation center timelines, recreation center ground should have been broken a year ago. It is causing the community to ask, "What's the holdup?"

**The Furman Letter.** A more serious safety-related issue with the rec center keeps surfacing. Frank Furman, a geologist and resident of Rolla, has tried hard to get someone - anyone - in city hall to listen to his very serious concerns about the site they have chosen for the big new lake and the recreation center in Ber Juan Park. In Furman's third letter to the mayor and council, he asked them to exercise some caution and have a geology study done before they risk this huge investment on a bad site. But the city's attitude continues to be, "The money is already on the table: Let the games begin!"

Furman freely admits his research into the site is not conclusive, but emphasizes that enough signs are evident for potential problems to exist.

At the heart of Furman's concerns is the possibility of karst at the rec center site. Karst is a "honeycomb" or otherwise porous geological formation commonly found in the Ozarks. It can wreak havoc on buildings, and can be disastrous. Construction on a karst site is possible, but not always feasible.

Furman first warned the city of his concerns in a letter dated July 4, 2000. His latest letter, dated October 14, 2000, sends a stronger message than the first. Furman writes,

**"Missouri karst and clay deposits have caused building problems in the past. When Fort Leonard Wood built a facility in the 1970's a bulldozer fell 50-70 feet into a cavern. Building on Cheltenham clay can cause building cracking (Frank, 1948). Thank you for assuring me that Sverdrup Facilities has taken these comments into consideration on the design of the facility, as they have experience in this field. Their \$10 million Richmond Heights Recreation Center project encountered "soil hazards left behind by the turn-of-the-century clay mining" (Sutin, 1998 a), even though "consulting engineers had told city officials that the soils in the area was unaffected by clay mining" (Sutin, 1998 b). Richmond Heights officials first decided to go with \$600,000.00 piers to anchor the building to bedrock, but "they would of have to spent all the money in the contingency fund for three public-building projects to pay for the piers" (Sutin 1998 b). They subsequently decided to move the center to the other end of the property (Sutin 1998 b). The project is behind schedule and over budget (Sutin, 1998b; Mihalopoulos, 1999)."**

Is the city setting aside the public safety because they were on a tight budget? Why does the city pick and choose which "experts" to believe? What happens to the city of Rolla if one of the rec center dozers plummets 50-70 feet into a cavern after receiving and ignoring a geologist's warning?

(Please refer to the link following the article for the Furman letter in its entirety.)

It is important to note that Furman wasn't among those who opposed the site at Ber Juan Park for construction of the recreation center.

In-house Expert. City code inspector Mike Gyovai announced at a Board of Adjustment meeting on October 5, 2000, that the rec center building plans have "major problems," and that he would not issue a building permit unless the problems were abated.

Councilwoman Judy Jepsen, who attended the Board of Adjustment meeting, was surprised by Gyovai's news. Evidently only the city administrator, mayor, and Councilman Rothwell were privy to the latest rec center snag.

According to official memos, Gyovai is refusing to issue a building permit because the code analysis and design criteria for the recreation center are incorrect, specifically concerning a firewall and the roof. City Administrator John Butz wrote a circumventive column about this sticky wicket in the October 15, 2000, RDN, which left many readers scratching their heads, wondering why, when the city has been so evasive with general information about the recreation center, they would suddenly give such finely tuned details out of the blue.

In a memorandum dated September 27, 2000, Gyovai wrote to Councilman Ed Rothwell,

**"On September 25, 2000, at your request, we again discussed review of the preliminary plans for the Health and Recreation Center. Basically you wanted to know if I was satisfied with the response from Sverdrup that we received concerning earlier written comments to you regarding code analysis of the plans. I told you that I was not satisfied with their answer, and that a construction permit would**

**not be issued until those concerns were adequately addressed."**

Gyovai continued,

**"On Wednesday (Sept. 28), I spoke with [a Sverdrup representative] and explained to [him] that the code analysis and the design criteria for the Recreation Center were incorrect. The firewall depicted on the plans is not a "firewall" but rather a "fire separation assembly" by code standard...This basically means that the building must then be reclassified from an unprotected (non-fire rated) building to a protected (fire rated) building. This further means generally that the exterior walls, interior supports and roof assembly will be required to be one-hour fire rated. This has the potential for either the consideration of the structural redesign of the building or for an expectation of a substantial increase in the cost of the building"**.

Currently, no building permit has been issued. Gyovai will be conducting a full review of the revised plans within the next two weeks.

In spite of the warnings and unresolved problems, the city began advertising for bids on the recreation center last week.

**Miracle Workers Please Apply.** While the council is in a pickle about building the rec center, they are looking for a miracle worker to manage the facility.

In the 9-13-00 edition of the RDN, the headlines read, "Six finalists selected for city rec job." We had seen the job requirements for rec center manager that the city issued months ago and wondered what planet this person would come from. The city expects them to market the center, plan partnering opportunities, oversee recreation programs, prepare statistical reports, prepares the budget, and the list goes on. What the city is really looking for is a genius/miracle worker; someone who can turn water into wine.

The RDN reported that these six lucky people would go through an "interview" process to include "group exercises and role-playing situations," and would be quizzed individually and collectively. What kind of person would subject himself or herself to this kind of all-day, fun-and-games style of interview? Obviously, most of the six candidates thought the same thing and turned down the "interview," leaving only one "finalist" (possibly someone in-house) to play the games. The city has decided to advertise the job again.

(I told you we could hover at Ber Juan Park until we ran out of gas!)

**Stop #4: Buehler Park.** By all appearances, the Buehler Park case is over - for now. The city returned the \$40,000 bond to the plaintiffs and probably doesn't plan to appeal.

If the Chamber of Tourism were wise, they would capitalize on Buehler Park as a selling point for the Visitors' Center. Buehler Park upgrades have been presented to the council numerous times, which include an ADA accessible restroom, a new drinking fountain (to replace the pipe sticking out of the ground which currently serves as its "drinking fountain"), small covered picnic tables (like the ones at Lions Club Park), and a kiosk for pointing "tourists" across the street to the Visitors' Center, which is not very visible from the road. This would be a win-win project for the Chamber: it would better promote Rolla esthetically, roll out the red carpet for travelers and help to bind old wounds - an important priority in light of the public's opinion of the motel tax they receive.

**Stop #5: Lions Club Park.** The Lions are Busy as Beavers - again. Lions Club is a perfect example of what happens when bureaucrats have their hands out of the pot. The Lions are upgrading their park to the tune of \$100,000. Lions Club Park is a privately-owned park - they receive NO public funding. What would

this community do without Lions Club Park?

Well, there would be no free pavilion reservations and fewer FREE soccer and ball fields. The new play equipment is unlike that found in the city parks-the kids just LOVE it. Lions Club is heavily used because they are true to their slogan: WE SERVE.

Too bad the same can't be said about our own parks department, the one that we subsidize with tax dollars. Just look at what we have for our tax dollars: concessions that (until this year) "mysteriously" lose tens of thousands of dollars YEARLY; a suffering softball league; an inadequate number of soccer fields; dilapidated (or locked) restrooms; a cash-in-lieu of parkland bandit that hijacks small developers, and an evasive department head who forgets who provides his paycheck.

**Better Parks Won't Appear From Thin Air.** Until taxpayers rise up and demand it, our parks will continue down the same path. Wouldn't you like to have nice parks? Updated ADA-accessible bathrooms which are UNLOCKED when you need them? New drinking fountains? Development in undeveloped parks instead of clear-cutting well-established parks? More soccer fields for our kids? More accountability?

**This Copter Ride is Over.** NSN wishes to remind you all that filing for city council positions begins in two months. Seats in every ward are open. Terms will be expiring for the following: Rothwell, Barklage, Kiefer, Madgits, DeFriese and Wiggins. Better local government begins with a better council.

\*\*link to entire Furman letter

[http://www.rollanet.org/~rwnash/Furman\\_letter\\_to\\_Butz.PDF](http://www.rollanet.org/~rwnash/Furman_letter_to_Butz.PDF)

Views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of No Standing News, nor of its Editor-in-Chief.

To receive "No Standing News" by e-mail, free of charge, send a message to [rwnash@rollanet.org](mailto:rwnash@rollanet.org) with the word SUBSCRIBE in the Subject line.

To unsubscribe this list, send a message to [rwnash@rollanet.org](mailto:rwnash@rollanet.org) with the word UNSUBSCRIBE in the Subject line.

Editors note: Copies of No Standing News can be obtained free from the Rolla Public Library who is a subscriber, and from Mail Boxes Etc Of Rolla Also visit our web site at: <http://www.rollanet.org/~rwnash/nsn.html>

I encourage distribution of "No Standing News." Please feel free to copy and distribute any issue.