City of Owensville awarded $20,000 to develop ‘livable streets’

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As Owensville city officials make plans for the eventual development of a walking and biking trail through town following acceptance last fall by Missouri State Parks of the Rock Island railbed, $20,000 in grant funds have been awarded to the city for helping create a “Livable Street Plan.”

Missouri’s Department of Health and Senior Services sought seven communities with populations under 20,000 residents which were interested in making improvements for bicycle and pedestrian routes connecting users with everyday destinations such as stores, waterparks, playgrounds, and schools. The city received a $10,000 grant in the fall of 2020 to help with “future development and planning” and another $10,000 award was announced in November 2021.

“It’s for future development and planning for creating a livable street plan,” said local bicycling enthusiast and retired educator Chrysa Niewald.

She’s taken on the role as the city’s “champion” for the project. The engineering firm helping prepare the report on the city’s behalf has worked with trail development efforts across the nation, according to Niewald.

She said the engineering portion of the grant award is designed to develop a “livable street” plan for future improvements to the city’s often patchwork collection of sidewalks. Entire blocks of sidewalks are absent in several locations, making it difficult to create multi-use paths.

“Activity-friendly routes refer to direct and convenient connections that offer protection from cars, making it easier to cross the street and reach different locations,” according to the Active Living Community of Practice Funding application. “They connect at least two everyday destinations and include four modes of active transportation: bicycles, pedestrian, multi-use paths, and public transit.”

Niewald said the plan is to extend and develop pedestrian and biking routes from residential areas to businesses and recreational locations.

Part of the grant includes funds for marking designated pedestrian and biking routes with paint and translated road markings. Niewald said the project’s other components are focused on “livable streets,” including sidewalks, bike lanes, multi-use paths, green spaces, and other elements that make living in the city more enjoyable for all.

Utility poles are evident on Scenic Ridge near the waterpark.

OWENSVILLE’S Board of Aldermen is scheduled to meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 18, at City Hall instead of on Monday, Jan. 17, due to the Martin Luther King, Jr., Day federal holiday. Gasconade County Sheriff Scott Eiler has been invited to address the board on a proposed half-cent sales tax for law enforcement to be placed on the county’s April 5 Municipal Election. The proposal would include a percentage of receipts going to municipal police departments.

GASCONADE COUNTY R-2 Schools are not in session on Monday, Jan. 17, due to the MLK holiday.

GASCONADE COUNTY R-2 School District’s Board of Education will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 18, at the Administrative Building. The meeting was pushed back one day due to the MLK holiday. R-2 directors typically meet on the third Monday of the month.

SCENIC REGIONAL Library in Owensville was closed Monday and Tuesday due to “COVID-related staffing shortages,” according to Steven W. Campbell, executive director. The library was set to open again at 9 a.m. today (Wednesday).

FILING FOR HERMANN city offices in the April 5 Municipal Election ended Dec. 28, 2021, with incumbent Mayor Bruce Cox being challenged by Robert O. Sitton. Ward 1 Councilman Ken Jenkins was also unopposed for his seat.

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