

# Grants Pass Daily Courier

## Revamped pavilion project for Riverside Park is moving forward

By Troy Shinn of the Daily Courier

Plans for a pavilion at Riverside Park are beginning to move forward, although city officials and others involved in the effort are now calling it a platform.

Last week the Grants Pass Parks Advisory Board agreed on new designs for a performance venue at the park that board members hope will better satisfy the needs of the Active Club and several other groups than the previously suggested pavilion structure.

The work will be underwritten by a \$500,000 grant from the Oregon Lottery that state Sen. Herman Baertschiger Jr. secured in the waning days of the 2015 session of the state Legislature.

Since then a number of stakeholders involved in the process have been politely butting heads over using the money for Boatnik, organized by the Active Club, or for the city's summer Concerts in the Park series. The City Council has final say.

The Active Club maintains that a pavilion or platform for a temporary VIP bandstand during Boatnik, one of the biggest community celebrations in the Northwest, will benefit all events in the park, including Concerts in the Park, the annual Back to the '50s festival in July and the Rotary Club Duck Derby.

Although there has been widespread consensus that the park could use a pavilion that could double as a bandstand or stage, there was disagreement among stakeholders over where in the park the structure should be located. For now it's going near the Seventh Street Bridge for Boatnik.

During a presentation to the Parks Advisory Board last week, project engineer Justin Gerlitz unveiled a less obstructive concrete structure than what was initially proposed.

"This new design will address a lot of the concerns we had with sewage and the floodplain," Gerlitz said.

The new design features a two-platform structure with a removable tarp roof that city officials hope will accommodate more seasons and events.

Gerlitz also assured that the elevation of the platforms and distance from the riverbank would keep the space from flooding during high water events.

The removable roof structure was an important component of the new design, as city officials had concerns that a permanent structure in the park would lead to vagrancy and camping concerns in wet months.

"A permanent roof structure unfortunately attracts people to sleep and camp out at nights," city Parks and Community Development Director Lora Glover said.

The only concern left on the roof issue was whether the structure would still look good with the canvas tops off.

"It's important for this to look good even without the covers on it," said Mayor Darin Fowler. "We don't want it looking like a skeleton."

Gerlitz said that this was possible.

"There's lots of different covers we could do ... and these things are very weather-proof and have longtime warranties for replacement too," Gerlitz said. "We could also put up some lights to light up the covers or make the structure look good without the covers on."

While firm numbers weren't provided, Gerlitz estimates that this type of structure would be cheaper than the alternative.

Parks board vice chairman Cliff Kuhlman praised the new design.

"It being cheaper allows us to do more with the park with the same money," Kuhlman said.

The money for this project is going to be provided through an Oregon Lottery grant that the city was approved for in 2016. The \$500,000 is expected to be distributed in April, according to Glover.

Active Club representatives at the meeting expressed support for the design.

"I think this is a great design and a really great start," said James Lowe.

The club did have some other space concerns for the Boatnik event, but were confident these can be added as the design goes forward.

Another plus for the new design was that the space may be good for the Concerts in the Park series, since the space allows for a lot of customization in stage size and acoustics.

While Glover, the city's parks director, said officials are still planning on something separate for the concert venue, many at the meeting agreed that they could try those events in this space and see how it works. The city has \$300,000 already set aside to replace the Izaak Walton building that was torn down in 1999.

The next phase of designs will address electrical installation for lights and sound systems.

Committee members passed a motion to go forward with the design, allowing Gerlitz to address some of the other concerns brought up at the meeting. The City Council and the public are expected to weigh in at an upcoming meeting.

Glover said that this phase of the project can take a while and pose the most pushback as neighbors will have to be notified and may object to a development in the park and near the river.

"We run the risk of, when we notify the surrounding neighbors, them opposing the site plan," Glover said. "Hopefully this will be less visually obstructive."

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