

11-28-18

To: Churchill's Grove Neighborhood Association
From: Rick Westlake, Member

Subject: Veterans Memorial Circle Beautification Project



I e-mailed the attached letter to Mayor McNamara regarding the possibility of our neighborhood becoming “caretaker” of Veterans Memorial Circle. He immediately phoned me to express interest in the proposed project and directed Public Works Director, Mark Stockton, to contact me. Mr. Stockton, along with three of his associates, met me and others on site at the circle to view the area and discuss how the city and Rockford citizens might work together to make this project a reality. At this meeting I presented the attached outline (Neighborhood Ownership...).

The following information evolved from this meeting:

1. The city would like to improve the visual condition of the circle.
2. Last summer the contractor assigned to take general care of the circle did not perform up to expectations and was replaced by a different contractor.
3. The city is open to partnering with a citizen group to spruce up the circle.
4. There is an irrigation system on all or most sections of the circle, but last summer it was not operated (or not operated correctly).
5. A secured source of water at the circle (for filling tanks or supplying hoses) can be made available to a responsible neighborhood group.
6. The city may or may not be able to assume responsibility for watering the circle and/or the flower beds on Auburn Street from the circle to the river.
7. There are several city entities involved in overall care of the circle including the Public Works Department, the Park District, and Rockford Visitors and Convention Bureau. IDOT is also involved as Main Street is a state highway.
8. Initial thoughts are for the citizen group to do the following:
 - a. Replace the tall perennial grass clumps in front of the four wing walls with bright colored annual flowers. (Citizens will carefully remove the grass clumps and a city contractor will transport them to other areas of the city for reuse.)
 - b. Plant annual flowers in the four “points” of the circle.
 - c. Plant annual flowers in the center of the circle.
 - d. Plant annual flowers in the beds on Auburn Street from the circle to the river.

- e. Water all flowers as-needed (unless the city can assume some or all of this responsibility).
 - f. Weed all beds and prune all flowers as needed throughout the season.
 - g. Maintain “litter patrols” to remove and dispose of litter in between weekly mowing and litter removal by the city contractor.
 - h. Clean up (remove dead flowers) all beds at the end of the season.
 - i. Assume financial responsibility for all citizen group activities.
- 9. The city may or may not be able to help pay some of the expenses.
 - 10. Flowers may be purchased from the city’s wholesale supplier.
 - 11. The city’s contractor will provide all mulch for topping the beds.

Attached is a proposed budget for the project, subject to review and modification by a citizens group.

In light of the city’s reception I propose that citizens move forward with this project. The citizens group may be a committee of Churchill’s Grove Neighborhood Association or an independent group may be formed. The advantage of the Association accepting responsibility is that it is a not-for-profit corporation already established with a good reputation. This may be advantageous from the aspects of fundraising and accountability.

This project would further beautify our neighborhood, draw neighborhoods and other Rockfordian individuals and businesses together, and make Veterans Memorial Circle more noticeable to passers-by. More importantly, it would be an expression of our community’s appreciation for past and present veterans from our city as was originally planned by city leaders.

Is Churchill’s Grove Neighborhood Association willing to take the lead on this project? Hopefully a decision can be made at the meeting tonight so work on this project can move forward accordingly. Spring isn’t that far away and there’s lots of detailed planning work to be done in the near future.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Rick Westlake, 1801 Camp Avenue