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City park concept is green

By Glypie Grider

If all goes as planned, residents of Pewee Valley may have a new outdoor theater space and walking trail as early as 2011, with several additions to come during the next four years.

City council member Amy Johnson, along with representatives from Environs Inc., a landscape and architecture firm out of Louisville, have a four-year vision for a 0.95-acre lot behind city hall to residents. They plan to convert the space into the city's first park.

"We want to use the space to help educate people about water quality, give them a place where they can gather and even bring in some bands and plays from the Little Colonels," said Johnson, who chairs the city's park committee.

Pewee Valley, which maintains its own water quality protection program, is required by state and federal mandate to educate residents about ways to improve the city's water quality.

"There are seven key imperatives, and about three of them deal specifically with education," said Dana Barrette, the chair of the city's water quality committee.

The city purchased the lot behind city hall three years ago and had originally considered converting an existing house on the property to a city museum.

"The house was in pretty bad shape so we had to get rid of it. When we decided we wanted to run our own water quality program, we thought this would be a perfect opportunity to use the land," Barrette said.

According to the proposal by Josephine and Michael Smiley of Environs, the "green space" will feature a gazebo, a stepping stone walking, several bioswales, a rain garden and a bridge reminiscent of a railroad car.

"The idea is to use the existing area and showcase to residents how they can implement bioswales and other features to improve the water quality on their own property," Josephine Smiley said during an information session recently at city hall.

Bioswales help control water flow and spread out over a wide-ranging area to better saturate the ground, she explained.

The park project will be funded by the city's current water quality fee and phased over four years. Barrette, who also chairs the finance committee, said it is premature to discuss actual costs at the moment as the park committee still wants community input.

Johnson said she hopes people will donate money and time for the project and mentioned the possibility of an engraved stepping stone fundraiser.

The first phase, anticipated to begin this fall, will focus on realigning a stream and placing culverts and a drainage area on the property. Barrette said the gazebo will likely be placed on the lot within the first year.

Environs has worked on projects for Shawnee and Iroquois parks in Louisville, as well as trails at Beargrass Creek and Oldham County Nature Preserve, among others. Johnson said the Pewee Valley park is modeled off of Willow Park in Louisville.

Council members continue to collect input from residents about the park.

"We especially want people to help us come up with a park name," Johnson said.

Pewee Valley residents Roger Hack and Michael Logsdon have recruited their Leadership Oldham County class to raise money to build a 20-foot octagon-shaped gazebo as a place to host community gatherings at the park.

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