

Lodge renovation gets city support

By Brenden West Assistant Editor | Posted: Wednesday, February 25, 2015 6:00 am

CLINTON — In its 100th year, the Clinton Rotary Club was looking for a “grand project” — the Legacy Project.

Dee Willoughby, Rotary fundraising committee chairman, announced Tuesday that the club has found one at Eagle Point Park.

“This is really an opportunity for us to make a difference,” Willoughby said during the Clinton City Council’s committee of the whole meeting. “To some degree, it’s a project that needs a little love, a little care and a little attention.”

The Rotary Club — “without a city dime” — is proposing a \$1 million enhancement of the Eagle Point Park Lodge. Built in 1934, Willoughby called the lodge Clinton’s most scenic destination in need of repair. Tuesday’s council meeting served as “the kickoff.”

The renovation calls for a veranda extension toward the river, a revamped front entrance, interior and exterior upgrades, reframing the main hall floor, remodeled bathrooms and other new features that Willoughby said will enhance visitors’ experience.

To him, the lodge isn’t a banquet hall. It’s a piece of the city that ties it to the river and its rich lumber history, a reason why everyone on Rotary is behind the project. It’s a “jewel” that Rotary wants “to realize its full potential as a destination and primary attraction.”

“Rotary as a club has supported the parks over the last four or five years,” Willoughby said. “It all filtered down to Eagle Point Park. It’s the crown jewel of our area.

“It just needs a little loving. Everybody knows the park. Everybody knows the lodge. It’s not like you have to sell the property. It sells itself.”

The club has self-imposed a deadline of June 30 to come up with 100 percent donated funding. Yet already, people have pledged support, with one donor committing as much as \$25,000.



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Brenden West/Clinton Herald Behind the Clinton Rotary Club’s latest fundraising campaign, the Eagle Point Park Lodge could see a major overhaul over the next 18 months.

If all goes according to plan, construction would start this summer in time to have a grand opening in summer 2016.

As for the city's involvement, the lodge is Clinton property, meaning Rotary will require permissions in the near future. The council unanimously voted to forward a resolution that would grant unlimited Rotary Club access to the lodge. Willoughby foreshadowed another request that may come by way of "in-kind" city donations, such as regular park cleanup that might obstruct the Rotary project.

Tuesday's campaign unveiling was the culmination of 15 months planning behind the scenes. Council members lauded the end result, with Councilman John Rowland praising Willoughby's personal initiative to meet and explain the project to numerous city officials.

"You've put a lot of time in with all of us," Rowland said. "We appreciate all of your efforts and those who have helped you."

A seven-figure sum may appear to outsiders like a lofty goal, Willoughby said. He admitted Rotarians never quite strove for such a project, but he's confident the club will see it done because of support it has already felt.

"We just want to make a statement that this is the coolest view around," Willoughby said. "We think it's a great vision."

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