

CDBG funds to fix sidewalks, handicap ramps

By Nick Mordowanec

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CLINTON TOWNSHIP — Clinton Township is about to hit the pavement with money provided by the federal government.

This year's community development block grant, or CDBG, funds were unanimously approved Oct. 5 by the township's Board of Trustees to fix numerous sidewalks in the community.

About \$150,000 in funds are being reprogrammed from a 2013 fiscal year housing rehab program. Another \$33,461 remaining from the Heritage Estates furnace project amounts to a CDBG-eligible total of \$183,461.

The board's approval first occurred Sept. 21 as a means of allowing the Department of Community Planning and Development to develop a written plan of how to exactly allocate the resources.

According to the township's engineering firm, Giffels Webster, on Sept. 30 the township received bids for the sidewalk project from two separate entities.

Audia Concrete Construction, Inc. was the lowest bidder, though the company's lowest bid still exceeded the amount of CDBG funds available. After a project scope revision, the company agreed to a modified amount of \$174,351.50.

Some handicap ramps and pavement replacement portions that are not part of the amended scope may be addressed in 2016 with similar funds.

The projects address numerous areas within the township, including Laurel Street, east of Hardy; 15 Mile Road, near Sharkey Street; Quinn Road and Lipke Street; Sharkey Street to Abraham Street; Abraham Street to Vermander Avenue; Vermander Avenue to Macoy Street; and areas off Quinn Road, between Morse and Floyd streets.

The funds are meant to be used in low- to moderate-income areas.

Scott Chabot, of Giffels Webster, stated Sept. 21 that not all handicap ramps need to be replaced.

Surveys determined what was most urgent, and those ramps that are not being replaced will have tactile strips added to them. Replaced sidewalks are generally removed altogether and then replaced with a newer, longer-lasting product, Chabot said.

Public Services Director Mary Bednar said slopes associated with handicap ramps, along with the tactile strips, are required by law.

Treasurer Bill Sowerby mentioned a 141-foot stretch currently exists with no sidewalk on Lipke Street, near Quinn Road. He requested that be added to the scope, and Chabot had no problem with that.

Because the money is given to the township by the federal government, Sowerby said, those dollars should be spent in a timely fashion.

Parents are more comfortable when their children can walk or bike via sidewalks, he said, and senior citizens feel safer walking on even pavement. He added that they promote recreation.

"Sidewalks are important to neighborhoods because they bring families, children and senior citizens together because what better place to meet other than on a walk in your neighborhood?" Sowerby said.

As for the handicap, or Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant, ramps, Sowerby said they welcome people with disabilities because a stretch of pavement doesn't abruptly end at the curb.

"When we were kids, you're riding the bike across the street and had to hop a curb, or you were in a wheelchair or using a walker, you had to navigate a curb," he said. "(It's not the case) with these ADA ramps.

"This just takes a very good neighborhood and makes it even better."

Work was expected to begin in mid-October.

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