

Park expansion to cost more

July 9, 2009 - 8:06 PM

By [JILL MOON](#)

The Telegraph

GODFREY - Bids opened this week for the Robert E. Glazebrook Park expansion, although the plans are more expensive than expected, village officials said.

"The cost is higher. It looks like the grant would pay less than half now," said Kimberly Caughran, director of the Godfrey Parks and Recreation Department. "We've had no time to analyze yet, but we should downsize the project within the grant budget."

She said if the village forfeits the grant, it "would put us in a bad spot for future grants or anything through (Illinois Department of Natural Resources)."

She said the project's cost came in at one-third more than expected.

An expansion cost of \$800,000 needs to be met in order for the matching grant received by the village in April 2008 to fund half of the project. But no hurry exists for Godfrey to build six new baseball diamonds included in the plan, because Lewis and Clark Community College spokeswoman Lori Artis said Tuesday that the college has no plans in the foreseeable future to stop leasing its ball diamonds for Godfrey's use.

Artis said the college has a 20-year master plan.

"We always have a plan but no specific plans," she said. "The kids can play on the diamonds. There are no plans for the immediate future and no money."

Caughran said she was under the general impression more than a year ago that LCCC's ball diamonds would be overtaken by campus expansion, based on a plan she viewed.

"I was under the impression that the college would eventually take the ball diamonds back, and that it would be sooner rather than later, but now I'm hearing that's not the case," Caughran said. "I thought this based on a plan that I had seen and from the people I heard talk about it."

Since the village received the grant, the original proposal has undergone at least three significant changes to accommodate residents living on Ladue Drive in Belmont Village subdivision, which borders the acreage of the park's expansion site.

Residents first voiced concern last August at an informational meeting village officials hosted to inform residents about the money and its use. Caughran explained that the money would go to expand the 10-year-old park, purchased by the village from Robert E. and Norma Glazebrook, who donated the improvement funding. Funding for the grants the village has received comes from Madison County and state and federal governments.

Phase 1 expansion of Glazebrook Park originally included construction of up to eight baseball/softball diamonds, a parking lot and a bicycle/walking trail on the expansion's easternmost portion. The expansion will add 80 acres immediately east of the park, now a 40-acre tract located on Stamper Lane. Phase 1 could take up to three years to complete, but as each part of the phase is completed, citizens could be able to use it.

The Village Board of Trustees voted unanimously to reduce the proposed eight ball diamonds to six. Ultimately, over several months, the plan includes three championship regulation-sized ball diamonds and three smaller diamonds for softball and youth. The fence line for the larger diamonds will be 330 feet from Ladue Drive. The fence line for the smaller ones will be 200 feet from the street. The large diamonds would not be built until Phase 2 of the expansion.

In March, the Village Board unanimously approved a proposal that included an 8-foot earthen berm, according to published plans available at the park department's Village Hall offices. The berm was added after Ladue Drive residents voiced strong opposition to eight baseball diamonds proposed near their property line because of perceived noise, dust and trespassing they said the planned diamonds could bring to their neighborhood.

After that, another change took place after the second proposed design that would replace an approximately \$80,000 earthen berm with a 7-foot-tall fence. All changes have been voted on unanimously by the Village Board.

Belmont residents wanted an improved baseball program for Godfrey's youngsters, but they did not welcome the baseball diamonds so close to their back yards, resident Dean Browning said during several Village Board meetings and Parks and Recreation Committee meetings.

When village trustees voted on the Glazebrook Park expansion, some felt a sense of urgency, based on the information given that LCCC eventually would not lease its diamonds to Godfrey and because of the required timeframe to respond to the \$400,000 grant, Mayor Mike McCormick said.

"I feel, as a trustee, I made a decision on misleading information, but I still feel the ball diamonds will be a good asset for our community," said McCormick, who was a trustee when votes were cast regarding the expansion.

Residents who have been following developments of the Glazebrook expansion also have expressed concern about two acres of trees that would be affected.

"We will take out a lot of scrub tree material," Caughran said. "Some significant trees will be replanted, but most of it is overgrowth and insignificant tree species."

The next event at Glazebrook Park is Family Fun Day from 2 to 8 p.m. Saturday, where the Great Corn Maze design will be revealed and "Godfrey Idol" starts at 6 p.m.

jill_moon@thetelegraph.com