

Sustainability park wins council vote

Outgoing vice mayor says matching grant money violates council's promise

By Greg Ruland
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Clarkdale Sustainability Park came under fire from several residents and the outgoing vice mayor after Mayor Doug Von Gausig asked Town Council to approve an application for a grant that could pay the salary of a manager for the project.

Council voted 3-1 to approve the application Tuesday, April 13, but not until outgoing Vice Mayor Jerry Wiley and four town residents complained the grant violated council's promise to pursue construction of the park without imposing any cost on residents.

Von Gausig and Councilmen Richard Dehnert and Curt Bohall voted in favor

of the application. Wiley voted against. Councilwoman Pat Williams was absent.

If approved, the grant, from the Walton Family Foundation, would provide \$156,000 for one year to pay the salary of a project manager to write grants and pursue other financing options for construction of the park, Town Manager Gayle Mabery said.

Wiley objected. To qualify, Clarkdale would be required to match the grant with \$74,000 worth of in-kind services and \$3,000 cash.

Wiley said the match was a violation of the council's promise not to spend town money on the park project.

"As far as I'm concerned, this is not the way to spend money when he have tough economic times like we do now," Wiley said.

Time spent by Mabery and other administrators promoting the park would qualify as in-kind services to satisfy the match at no additional cost to the town,

Von Gausig responded.

Town administrators would be spending a portion of their time pursuing the Sustainability Park project whether or not Clarkdale applied for the grant, he said.

Mabery said she and two other administrators spend between 20 and 25 percent of their time working on Sustainability Park issues.

Clarkdale resident Phil Terbell objected to the tax burden he and other residents shouldered to pay for town services and predicted the park would eventually increase taxes.

"I'm getting tired of it," Terbell said. "There's a current out there for a Town of Clarkdale Tea Party."

Terbell said if town administrators spend that much time on the park project, perhaps it could get by with one less administrator.

Dehnert responded town administrators were exempt employees who regularly work overtime after hours and on weekends at no additional cost



Doug Von Gausig



Richard Dehnert

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to the town to satisfy all their normal duties and to work on Sustainability Park issues.

"I have no reason to believe they have taken that time away from their other duties," Dehnert said.

Dehnert said his vote in favor of applying for the grant did not mean he would vote in favor of accepting the grant in the event it was approved.

Clarkdale residents Christine Schwab, Ellie Bauer and Jerry Brown also spoke against the grant application.

Bauer said the town should

focus its resources on finding ways to open the town swimming pool and repair its historic buildings.

"How about focusing on what's really important to the people of this community today?" Bauer asked.

Von Gausig responded the council was trying to create a sustainable future for the town in order to accomplish those goals and others that will improve residents' quality of life.

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