



Presented March 4, 2019  
**Town Council Report for February 2019**  
**Parks and Recreation Activity Highlights:**

### ***Park Programming***

- *Environmental Education and Recreational Programming:* Our regular programming in this area saw a total of 441 participants, with 250 of that total representing “drop-in visitors” at our Nature Center (unconnected to any particular program). When we have visitors who just swing by our staff often give a short, impromptu “mini-program”, and 90 of this previously reported number of drops-ins were able to receive this added benefit to their visit. This total of 441 represents a decrease of about 189 visitors in the numbers from the previous month (and a drop of a bit over 300 from this same time last year). Such fluctuations are not unusual, due to seasonal programming variations, actual weather on the weekends, etc... but we feel this was a decent month. As an additional note Park Naturalist, Mindy Murdock has already advertised our park programming and our Day Camps to both the mailing list of last year’s participants and the wider list of those subscribing to our “*Park Places*” our own, long-running Park Department E-Newsletter. Registration for these upcoming programs is already filled in many cases.
- *Zionsville Parks Garden Plot Rental Program:* As has been the tradition for over 20 years, the garden plot rental program for this year will kick off the Thursday after the March Park Board meeting (so 8 AM at Town Hall on March 14<sup>th</sup>). Plots will be \$25 for each 20’ by 20’ space and will again be available at two locations, Elm Street Green (with ~30 plots) and Heritage Trail Park (with ~35 plots). The nominal fee includes provision of water onsite as long as we aren’t under drought restrictions. We also spring-till each of the overall plot areas one time prior to opening them up for planting. Since gardeners run the risk of a hard frost through May 15<sup>th</sup> that is our traditional target date for opening the plots to planting, but obviously this is weather dependent. We also ask that the plots are cleared of everything brought in by the gardener by October 20<sup>th</sup>. And we use local farmers (and their specialized equipment) for our plowing and sometimes rainfall back them up on their own fields (which of course logically take their priorities).

### ***Other Highlighted Parks Matters***

- *Tri-Kappa Donation Received:* While the park system often receives generous yearly donations from this wonderful organization, this year they were especially kind to us. The donated \$1875 for our use as the department sees fit. In consultation with the Park Board, we plan to use this gift to contribute towards preparing museum quality, professional exhibits for the new nature center. Tri Kappa was very excited about our decision.
- *Next Level Trail Grant (NLT):* The NLT Grant program and our application were described in the last month’s Town Council report. We wanted to announce the application was successfully submitted before the State’s deadline. As a brief reminder, if our application is successful and the State fully funds us in this first round; we anticipate this project would extend our current Big-4 Rail Trail both southward and northward. If we are funded to build both; this southern trail extension would pause at this point at Zionsville Road, the northern would reach our common boundary with Whitestown (who applied for their own NLT application to build towards us). Our project plans to build about 1.78 miles of new trail surfacing (counting both directions). In each direction along the way, we would connect to an additional ~0.25 miles “orphaned” trail (bringing in an additional 0.5 miles total of existing trail into connection to our overall system).

The estimated investment in land acquisition, grading, and construction to build these trail links and bring into play a further two and a quarter miles of trail would be ~\$2.65 Million. If fully funded by the State, it’s planned this up to 80%/20% grant would cover ~\$1.9 Million of this total investment. The remaining local match is anticipated to be entirely related to the land needed for the corridor (some yet to be acquired) and this has been professionally valued at ~\$747,545. As we have been working on this project long before this grant program, we have some land obligated already (and it still can be valued as part of our match). And of this total land investment number, our professionals calculate we have some ~\$330,000 in land value already pledged in donation to this cause. This leaves a bit over ~\$415,000 in estimated land value yet to acquire as part of this grant project, either through donation, bargain sale, or some other form of acquisition.