

Village of Rochester Wanless Park Development

In 1997, a 17 acre parcel of floodplain land along the East Shore of the South Fork of the Sangamon River was conveyed to the Village of Rochester, by Gail Wanless of the Wanless Land Trust. This land was formerly a sewage treatment plant and the deed call for it to be developed and maintained as a nature preserve similar to Lincoln Memorial Gardens, with trees, bushes, flowers and hiking paths, and with no sports facilities and no motor driven vehicle or cycle being permitted. If the Village does not follow the covenants, the land title will revert to the Wanless Trust.

The first step in planning Wanless Park is surveying and monumenting the property boundaries so the Village and adjoining landowners know their property lines. This will likely be done in April by Sangamon Valley Surveying. This will be funded by the Village from the FY15 budget.

The next step will be to hire a landscape architect to design this floodplain, trees-and-trails park within limitations of the covenant by the Wanless Trust. This design will provide a professional inventory, assessment, and vision of the future park. This planning process will also provide an opportunity for adjoining landowners to review and comment on the proposed plan. It will also provide a basis for grant requests if needed. There is currently funding in the Village FY16 budget to pay for the design process.

As with other Rochester parks, the following implementation steps will be largely dependent on volunteers working with the park design, donations or grants. One can anticipate the removal of weedy invasive brush (primarily autumn olive and honeysuckle) by volunteers including neighbors, the Operating Engineers Union 965 Training Program, or Arboretum volunteers. Two Rochester teachers and Scout Leaders have expressed interest in involving children in planning or developing the park and its trails. Planting of native trees will further enhance the park.

The Village will continue to monitor, operate and maintain the sanitary sewer pump station and underground pipelines located in Wanless Park.

April 13, 2015