

# Halliwell, Cass Park projects in line for federal spending

By **STELLA LORENCE**  
slorence@woonsocketcall.com

**WOONSOCKET** — Over \$2 million in local earmarks is flowing to Woonsocket and North Smithfield through the federal spending bill Congress passed last week.

The \$460 billion legislative spending package prevented a partial government shutdown by funding about a dozen key departments and agencies through the rest of the fiscal year, but it also included over \$120 million in Rhode Island earmarks.

“These impactful earmarks will benefit neighborhoods, spur economic development and make a positive difference for communities across the state,” said Sen. Jack Reed, who sits on the Senate Appropriations Committee, in a statement.

Among those earmarks is a \$1 million grant for the Halliwell School Redevelopment Project in North Smithfield. Jeffrey Porter, an architect who chairs the Halliwell Review Committee, said the committee and their consultant, Lisa Marie

Andoscia, started applying for the grant when former Congressman David Cicilino was still in office, but Congressman Gabe Amo helped get it across the finish line.

“It’s just exciting to see the support from our federal leaders for the project,” Porter said.

The town has already pledged \$1.2 million from the general budget to demolish the existing buildings and remediate asbestos, and previously obtained a separate \$4 million federal grant for construction of the community center. This latest \$1 million earmark will specially fund the site preparation that comes after the demolition, as well as some landscaping and preparation of the community garden, according to a copy of grant application obtained by The Call & Times.

“We envision a well-lit green space with walking and biking paths, benches, beautiful shade trees, a community garden that supplies fresh vegetables to the food pantry, and

See **SPEND**, page A2

# Spend

Continued from page A1

possibly a pickle ball court." Town Administrator Paul Zwolenski wrote to Cicilline last year.

Porter said it would benefit the town not to wait much longer before starting the project, since construction costs have increased since the committee formed a few years ago to begin exploring their options for the site. The committee has been working with the architecture firm Bargmann Hendrie + Ar-

chetype and the engineering firm Weston & Sampson to conceive a master plan for a community center and garden at the site.

"It's being recognized," Porter said of the committee's work. "The committee is certainly here to provide an amenity for the town."

The council accepted the master plan at a joint meeting with the Committee in January, and Porter is now seeking a resolution in support of the plan from the council at their next meeting to make applying for similar grants easier.

Over in Woonsocket, a similar project also received some more federal funding. Woonsocket's community center is being planned for a spot in Cass Park near the athletic complex that will soon be constructed there.

Woonsocket ARPA Administrator Paul Luba told the City Council back in January that the city was in the final stages of receiving a \$5.4 million grant for the community center through a state program backed by federal American Rescue Plan Act funds. The congressional spending bill

includes another \$500,000 for that project and for Cass Pond restoration.

Public Works Director Steve D'Agostino told The Call & Times this week that both the Cass Pond restoration and the community center project are "definitely a go." Restoring Cass Pond will likely involve dredging it, making it cleaner, deeper and bigger, D'Agostino said.

The community center project is being considered as complementary to the athletic complex project, with facilities available for both the public

and the student-athletes at the high school. The \$5.4 million grant specifies that the community center must provide programming in health monitoring, education and work skills training, though the building is also expected to house locker rooms and a weight room.

Another \$787,000 was set aside for Woonsocket, though not for the city government directly. Sen. Reed's office confirmed that the appropriation is for the Army Corps of Engineers' "Local Woonsocket Protection Project," a flood

risk management project along the Blackstone River. Initially addressed in the mid-1950s, the flood risk is mitigated by four earth fill dikes and a concrete flood wall on the river's east bank, all maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers. Bryan Purtell, a spokesperson for the Army Corps of Engineers, confirmed that the earmark is for regular upkeep and minor maintenance, as well as general operation throughout the year.

Follow Stella Lorence on Twitter @stlorence3.