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ON THE RIGHT PATH
City of Ozark's Jeremy Parsons and Ozark Greenways' Mary Kromrey stand near the planned Chadwick Flyer Rail Trail intersection with the James River Greenway.

© JESSICA ROSA

Trail Connections

Plans moving to link Springfield, Ozark with a greenway trail

by Mike Cullinan • mcullinan@sbj.net

An estimated \$8 million new greenway trail spanning nearly 7.5 miles is in the planning phase, with Springfield and Ozark city officials calling it a regional connector for the two communities.

A visioning steering committee was formed in April to study the southern portion of the Chadwick Flyer Rail Trail, which runs between Springfield and Ozark. The

committee is focused on the development of the approximately 7.5-mile length of the trail from near the edge of Missouri Veterans Cemetery in Springfield south to the Ozark Community Center, 1530 W. Jackson St. Jeremy Parsons, public works director for the city of Ozark, and Mary Kromrey, executive director of Ozark Greenways Inc., lead the committee.

"This planned trail alignment follows that old rail corridor as much as we can directly to the Ozark Community Center," Kromrey said, while standing on a portion of the rail line that intersects with a segment of the James River Greenway. She noted that area of the rail

See **TRAIL** on page 30

BigShots falls behind schedule

by Kyle Boaz • kboaz@sbj.net

A proposed technology-centered driving range has fallen behind its original development plan.

The development of a Peoria, Illinois-based BigShots Golf LLC franchise by Springfield businessman Tim O'Reilly was originally planned to begin construction in the first quarter of this year at the intersection of Kearney Street and Glenstone Avenue.

"We are 99% finished with our plans and have had to address some convoluted sewer easement issues that existed on the site," said O'Reilly, who is conducting the project through Glen-Kearney Development LLC, via email. "We are ready to bid the project out to general contractors and should start construction within 45-60 days with a 10, 11-month timeframe."

Three BigShots developments in as many states also have had project delays, or ceased development altogether.

Dirt has been flattened and some gravel is in place at the site of the former Kmart in Springfield. The project site sits between the recently opened Kum & Go and the Royal Grill Buffet along Kearney Street. No construction equipment is currently on-site.

"I'd say that we are within our original estimated timeframe," O'Reilly said. "There are always changes and issues to deal with in a development project, so this timeframe was expected."

O'Reilly previously told Springfield Business Journal construction would start in the first quarter, but now is

See **DELAY** on page 36

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Trail: 16 easements sought

Continued from page 1

line hasn't been in use for about four years.

The rail trail runs nearly 17 miles in length from National Avenue near downtown Springfield to the Finley River Trail in Ozark. But only about 10 miles of it is in use by BNSF Railway Co., with the remaining portion not in active service.

Kromrey said the property in the area near the cemetery and south to the Christian County line is owned by City Utilities and the city of Springfield. The rail line's intersection with the James River Greenway is just steps away from an aging iron bridge that crosses the James River.

"One day, we hope this can go all the way to downtown (Springfield)," she said of the planned trail development. "But this project right now is talking about going from this point to the (Ozark Community Center)."

Project plan

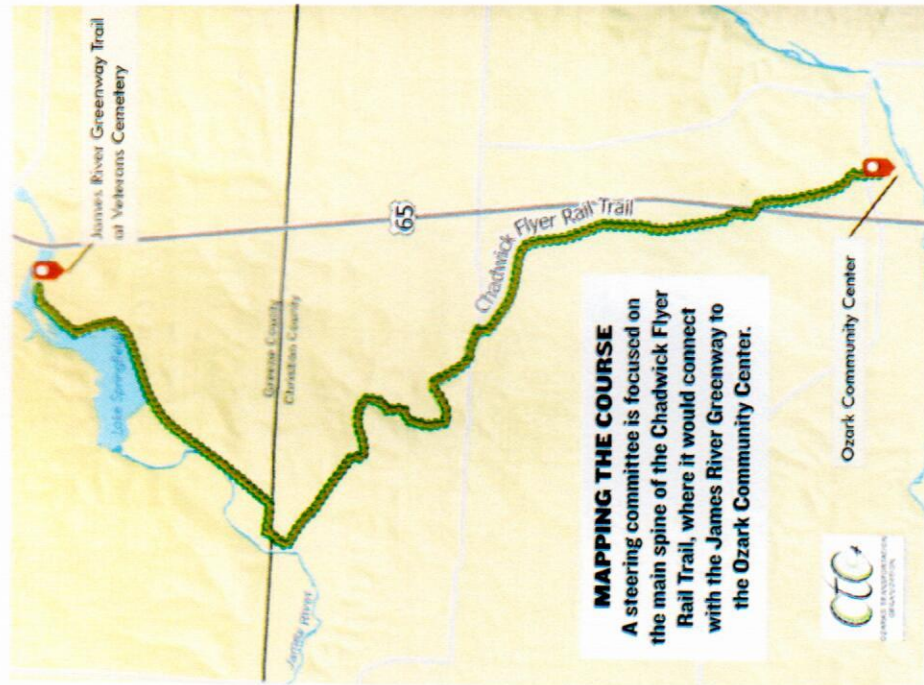
Both Parsons and Kromrey have been on board with the project well before May, with discussions by Ozark city officials beginning in 2017.

"We started looking at ways to connect, and by that I mean multimodal transportation," he said.

Right of way, trails and learning about the Chadwick Flyer's history was part of the process. The Ozarks Transportation Organization compiled a 2017 trail investment study that included, in part, cost estimates for the Chadwick Flyer Rail Trail to be developed as a greenway trail south to the Ozark Community Center.

The \$7.6 million estimate was based on 2017-18 prices, with inflation noted to be included for each year beyond 2018. Kromrey said that puts the current price tag around \$8 million.

Alignment for the trail is yet to be solidified, as easements from 16 landowners will need to be granted. Those discussions are yet to take place for the most part, Kromrey said, as the visioning committee just held its first meeting in May. Because Ozark Greenways and the committee want to be sensitive to any landowners' wishes to not partner on the project,



different alignments also will be considered.

"When we got this committee together, this was showing that this is not an Ozark project, it's not a Springfield project, it's a southwest Missouri project that is going to benefit everyone," Parsons said. The Missouri Department of Transportation also is in favor of

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the project and part of the discussion, he added, as officials need to determine the best method for users to access the trail across Highway 65.

"We're either going to go over it or under it, so we're going to get across it," Kromrey said. "We're going to make sure it's the safest way for folks who are biking and walking."

Funding for the project also is yet to be secured, as different options will be studied, Kromrey said. A project of this length that crosses into different jurisdictions, including two cities and two counties, has realities of shared maintenance agreements and a funding package, she added.

Parsons said transportation alternative programming funding comes from the federal government, which can help with the cost. Kromrey added there also would be plans to put forward a funding appeal to the public early next year, with donations accepted at every level.

"It's just timing as there's lots of moving parts," she said of future funding and easement considerations. "This is a very important story to tell and the connections it's going to help us make to each other and to our outdoors in the future. We need to take a hot minute, and we want to set that up correctly."

Early support

One of the property owners previously

approached is David Counts with Kindrick-Counts Land Development LLC, who is developing Olde World Estates, a residential subdivision in Ozark. Counts said the development would have around 317 lots when it's complete. Work started in March and he expects it will take about two years to finish. Currently, 60 houses are built, 10 are occupied and around 30 are sold, he said, noting the infrastructure costs will total around \$11 million when both phases are concluded.

The subdivision also will have a portion of the Chadwick Flyer Rail Trail running through it. Parsons said he approached the Olde World Estates developers in mid-2017 and the interest was immediate.

"They not only granted us the easement, they actually built that section of the trail," he said. "Before the end of this year, we'll have one-sixth of this trail complete within Christian County. In the grand scheme of things, these are usually 20- to 25-year plans."

Phase I of the trail is complete, Counts said, with work starting this month on the second phase, which should wrap up by the end of the year. Between the two phases, he expects his trail investment to be about \$290,000.

"I thought it was a good idea," Counts said. "Trails in Springfield are really nice and I think it's good for the community. It sets our subdivision apart from anybody

want phased in over the next 20 years," she said. City of Ozark and Ozark Greenways officials also will be working behind the scenes to forward the project, she added.

Both Kromrey and Parsons see the trail as an opportunity to showcase the Ozarks, while providing more transportation and recreational options to connect with nature.

"We're going to do it; we're committed," Kromrey said. "So are we going to have a phased-in project over a longer time frame or are we going to get in there and knock it out?"

\$290K

Planned investment for trail by developers of Olde World Estates

Opportunities abound

At its next meeting later this month, the visioning committee plans to start setting stakes and timelines for the project. Kromrey said the time it took to get to this point was to make sure, to the greatest extent possible, that all variables had been captured before assigning a timetable.

"We all agree this isn't a project that we

Vision Quest

A visioning steering committee to study the Chadwick Flyer Rail Trail was formed in May, comprising various representatives in the Springfield and Ozark area. Jeremy Parsons, director of Ozark Public Works, and Mary Kromrey, executive director of Ozark Greenways, lead the committee. Other members, in alphabetical order, are:

- Chris Bauman, Ozark R-6 School District;
- Chuck Branch, Ozark Planning and Zoning Board;
- Scott Bratcher, City Utilities Board of Public Utilities;
- John Dillon, Ozark Planning and Zoning Board;
- Sean Dixon, Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau;
- Katherine Dowdy, Ozark Farmers Market;
- Bruce Galloway, Ozark Board of Aldermen;
- Ralph Phillips, Christian County Commission;
- Nathan Posten, Ozark Board of Aldermen;
- John Russell, Greene County Commission; and
- Megan Stack, Finley Farms

Source: Ozark Greenways Inc.

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