

The Nosy Neighbor

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Coming Soon—Refurbished Tennis Courts & More

Tennis Courts

Termed a Centennial project of the Orion Lions Club, the tennis courts at Love Park will soon be resurfaced not only for tennis play, but also pickleball and basketball.

The Orion Lions Club held fundraising events to kickstart the project and the village has participated by installing four new posts on the two courts and improving drainage and wiring to court lights.

Village leaders are considering replacement of the west fence and gates. Cost of the non-budgeted item is expected to be around \$3,500. Fence replacement was recommended by Recreation Committee trustee, Roger Peterson. The village board is expected to address this expense at its June 5th meeting.

The tennis courts have been a fixture in Love Park since its inception. Planning for the park began in 1972 and in

1973, village officials applied for a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant to purchase land and develop the park.

The grant was awarded and work began on all facets of the park, including the tennis courts.

In 1975, improvements began for the installation of tennis court fencing, netting, and lights, estimated at \$18,200. A subsequent grant for this expense was denied, but the improvements moved forward at any rate.

As a recipient of the initial grant, the village is required to maintain the Love Park site in perpetuity for public outdoor recreation.

Ball Diamond Upgrade

Coming late summer or early fall is the installation of a grass infield at the large ball diamond in Love Park. Irrigation will be added and

drainage improved.

The project request was brought to the village board by the Orion High School baseball coach, since Love Park is home to OHS boys baseball.

After some back and forth negotiations between the high school board and the village board, it was finally determined the village would pursue a request for grant funds from the Wyman Coulter Trust.

The trust board agreed to award \$60,000, in \$15,000 installments over the course of four years, as long as it has adequate funds. The project will cost \$61,500.

Bush Turf, Inc., from Milan, Illinois, will do the work.



Ahem, Could You Be One of 612 Who Forgot?

Last June, included in *The Nosy Neighbor* was a Cross-Connection Control Survey to be completed by every property owner in Orion. To-date, the village has received 188 responses. Lacking are about 612 surveys. Yikes.

The Illinois EPA requires 100% compliance. The village will be forced to send employ-

ees door-to-door if surveys are not completed and returned. As can be imagined, this would be a silly waste of time and money.

Property owners can now find the survey online at the village website, www.orionil.org or pick up a copy at the village hall. It takes less than five minutes to complete.

Surveys can be returned to village staff, put in the drop box at the front door of the village hall, or mailed to P.O. Box 69, Orion, IL 61273.

The survey helps prevent accidental contamination of Orion's drinking water system by identifying cross-connections like lawn irrigation systems and others.

It's Time for Clean Up Week!



June 12th-15th

Don't forget

**It only comes
around once a year!**

Orion will hold its annual Clean Up Week from June 12th-15th. A village crew will scan curbsides across town each day to look for items to pick up. If an item is not picked up, chances are it could be on the ineligibility list or a crew needs to return with larger equipment to lift or otherwise accommodate the piece.

Ineligible waste includes tires, appliances, water heaters, hazardous waste, railroad ties, corrosive reactive materials such as swimming pool cleaning materials and other chemicals, electronics, building materials from remodeling projects, batteries, and landscape waste. Items in closed bags or boxes will not be collected. Paint cans with 1" or less of dried paint will be picked up.

Items placed at the curb early in the day stand the best chance of being picked up the same day. Items must be placed at the curb no later than 8 a.m. on the last day of pick up, Thursday, June 15th.

Here's your opportunity to clean out the basement and attic, throw out that old mattress, chair, or sofa, and get rid of the clutter!

Golf Carts & Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles

**To review all
requirements:**

**Go to
www.orionil.org
and click on
Downloads.**

**Select Municipal
Code, then Chapter
Sixteen.**

Scroll to page 1624

In August of last year village board members approved a method for golf carts and certain off-highway vehicles to operate on village streets.

The vehicles must meet the definition as outlined in the Municipal Code of the Village of Orion and be equipped with certain basic items such as turn signals, a horn, rearview mirror, headlights, etc. Drivers must be licensed and at least 18 years of age.

No person can operate these vehicles without first completing an application, obtaining a permit—at a cost of \$50—and getting an annual inspection. Inspections are performed by Triple E Sales for a \$10 fee. Permits can be purchased at the village hall and are valid for one year, based on the village's fiscal year—May 1st through April 30th. Fees are not prorated.

Applications are reviewed and approved by a deputy with the Henry County Sheriff's Dept., Orion Division. Proof of current liability insurance must be presented.

In Memory



**Shy and Cody,
Two Rescued Dogs**



Keep Your Pet & the Public Safe

Animal regulations in Orion limit pet owners to a maximum of three dogs and three cats. Cats and dogs must be under restraint, meaning kenneled, fenced, or on a leash.

Animals taken on property outside an owners premises shall have in their possession an appropriate container or other reasonable means to pick up and remove potential defecation by the animal. Such defecation must be disposed of in a sanitary manner.

Rules are also in force for barking dogs and animals that bite. Regulations were tightened in June 2014, after a rash of dog bites. Owners of animals that bite can be fined up to \$750, and animals deemed dangerous or vicious may be barred from the village.

Animals found off-leash and picked up by Henry County Animal Control will be transported to a holding facility in Cambridge. A fee of \$100 is charged to the owner of such animal.

Ryden & TIF District (cont'd from pg. 4)

Attorney Ames said the challenge to the village's TIF district included a count that the agreement with the school district was illegal. Ames filed a motion to have that item considered under a separate count and the motion was granted. Another motion was then made to dismiss the separate count as the school and the village never signed an agreement in regard to what the village offered the school. Also, the TIF plan was amended so no TIF funds would be disbursed to the school until both sides signed an intergovernmental agreement.

Trustee Steve Morse expressed concern over the fact that the village was not receiving TIF revenue from Henry County. All ordinances were approved in 1993 and revenue should have been received in 1994. In conversations with Henry County Clerk Martha Sawyer, Orion's Clerk Sampson was told the states attorney had given instructions to withhold TIF revenue. Attorney Ames indicated the village could apparently expect no cooperation from the county.

The village's TIF case went to court in September 1994. When time ran out on the court's calendar and arguments were not yet completed, the case was extended to four additional days in January 1995.

In a story written in the January 22, 1995 edition of the Quad City Times, a move by the Orion School Board to raise its tort levy by \$20,000 to cover legal fees (to fight the TIF district) was deemed questionable by Pat Toomy of the Illinois State School Board. Using tort funds to cover TIF legal costs was considered a legal gray area.

Meanwhile, Carney and park superintendent Ron Saunders worked on a plan to install new playground equipment in Central Park. The equipment was expected to cost \$24,000.

New equipment would be installed but Carney didn't get the chance to participate. She and other incumbents running for re-election to the village board were defeated in the April 1995 election. The controversy of the TIF district had taken its toll. The board would continue to be led by Mayor Ryden, but he was joined by new trustees Mel Drucker, Steve Begley, Mitch Quigley, and Bill Larkins.

On May 9th, shortly after the new board took office, a judgment was handed down that the village's TIF district had been deemed illegal.

On June 19th, the village board voted to appeal the

ruling to the 3rd District Appellate Court in Ottawa. New trustees Begley and Drucker voted against the appeal but Larkins voted in favor and Quigley was absent.

Larkins felt there had been misinformation floating around about the TIF district, and he reminded the board the state of Illinois provided the Act as a financing tool for municipalities. Larkins noted there were 396 TIF districts throughout the state. Trustee Morse favored TIF as a financing tool and also to help growth. Drucker said the sewer project would not be halted by the invalidation of the TIF district, and Begley objected to spending additional money to try to win on appeal.

Attorney Ames reminded the board the costs for the appeal would probably not exceed \$1,000 and if the case was won, he was willing to put a cap on the fee charged for his work, with that cap possibly being in the \$7,500 range.

After only a few months as a trustee and several absences from meetings, Mitch Quigley resigned. His resignation was accepted as he had moved from the area.

In September 1995, Mayor Ryden appointed Jeff DePorter to fill Quigley's vacancy, but not without a little brouhaha. DePorter would not immediately accept the appointment due to the fact that only two trustees voiced approval, one voted no, and two others stayed silent. Those who were silent were recorded with the majority vote. DePorter asked each trustee to express their view of his appointment. After hearing satisfactory answers, DePorter accepted the position.

Long-time street superintendent, Mardis Cox, announced his retirement, effective April 30, 1996. Not long after, the village board learned its appeal on the TIF judgment had failed. The board then voted to continue its contract with Ames to appeal the case to the Illinois Supreme Court. The case was not accepted for appeal by that court. The TIF district was dead.


On August 5, 1996, Clerk Sampson called to order the board meeting and read a resignation letter from trustee Steve Morse, effective July 31st, followed by a letter of resignation from mayor Jan Ryden, effective August 3rd, thus ending Ryden's political career in Orion.

Bill Larkins was later appointed Acting President to complete Ryden's term. -Lori Sampson

After the ruling from the court, Attorney Ames felt free to comment on the case. In an editorial to the local newspaper, he credited Mayor Ryden and former mayor, Barbara De la Paz for taking note of lost population and student census and taking remedial action.

He also wrote "your village board is a team which is as good as any, better than most, and certainly deserves your whole-hearted support in the efforts made to take Orion into the Twenty-First Century on a positive and progressive note."

Clerk Sampson's personal remarks about Ryden will be printed in the September edition of The Nosy Neighbor



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Board Stands Firm on TIF District Advantages

Our story resumes in March 1994, after Henry County voted to sue the village of Orion for the establishment of a TIF district and invited other taxing bodies to join its mission. Ultimately, the Orion School Board would agree to participate financially in the lawsuit against the village. Other taxing bodies also offered up varying amounts to fight the legal battle against the village.

Led by Mayor Jan Ryden, the village board remained resolute in its opinion on the advantages of the established TIF district.

Trustee Mike Dunne felt legal expenses would far outweigh the funds taxing bodies were expecting to lose due to the creation of the district. Dunne urged those opposed to the expenditure of these funds to contact county board members and let their feelings be known.

Attorney John Ames said a couple of good years of economic growth had already passed and he hoped the lawsuit would be settled before growth slowed or came to a halt. Many acres of ground with favorable zoning existed along Route 150, but the development benefits of the TIF district could not be advertised until the suit was settled.

President Ryden had asked the Orion Area Chamber of Commerce to publicly commit its support of the district, as in-

creased development in Orion would be beneficial to already established businesses, but he never received a reply.

Though TIF talk was prevalent at almost every meeting, the board did manage to address other issues. After meeting with representatives of the Illinois Department of Transportation and State Representative Don Moffitt, it was learned badly needed improvements to U.S. Route 150 were scheduled to begin in 1995. New sidewalks were poured in Love Park and development of the Parkview Subdivision began.

The board heard information about the village's summer bus transportation to Hillcrest Resort. The program was managed by village trustee Shirley Carney. Other communities and townships also participated. At the end of the 1994 summer season, Carney encouraged the board to drop the program due to lack of participation by Orion residents. Only 22% of total riders were from Orion. Carney hoped a community with more participants would continue the program.

Also moving forward was the sewer relief main project and plant upgrade—the project for which TIF funds were intended. The State Bank of Orion was interested in funding the project but Illinois EPA revolving loan funds provided a lesser interest rate—2.815%.

(cont'd on page 3—see Ryden & TIF District)