

F. M. KIRBY FOUNDATION SOLICITATION EVALUATION FORM

DATE: November 3, 2023
Program Area: Arts, Culture, Humanities

REQUEST DATE: October 24, 2023

APPLICANT:
City of Wilkes-Barre/Kirby Park
40 East Market Street
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711-0451

CONTACT: Ms. Joyce Zaykowski, Director of Economic and Community Development

AMOUNT REQUESTED: \$204,575.00

NATURE OF REQUEST: Toward the Kirby Park ADA Improvements

GRANT HISTORY

SUPPORT: 1966-2006

OF APPROVED GRANTS: 2

TOTAL DOLLARS: \$145,000

LAST GRANT DATE: 12/15/2006

LAST GRANT AMOUNT: \$120,000

FYE DATE:

AFS DATE:

Year Approved	Approved Amount	Approval Date	Grant Purpose
2006	\$120,000	12/15/2006	Toward the Kirby Park Electrical Project
1966	\$25,000	12/31/1966	Kirby Park Improvement

DIANA KOSTAS COMMENTS: The City has a total project estimate of \$204.6K for additional walkways around the water and a new pier/landing area. The most significant costs for the project are \$97,500 for the walkway, \$21K for the engineering firm, 20K for the pier/landing area and a 10% contingency fee of \$17K. I recommend we fully fund the project in 2023, as we have room in the budget, rather than spread the grant over two years. This will be a great resource for the community that is accessible to all!

GINA BEVIGLIA COMMENTS: In September, JJK and I visited Kirby Park and met with members of the team from the City of Wilkes-Barre who work on various facets of park, including Mayor George Brown and Director of Economic and Community Development Joyce Zakowski. During this visit, we learned about the accessibility work that has been done in the park to date and the projects that are still in the works; combined, the completed and planned improvements are expected to total \$2.3 million. Mayor Brown emphasized that disability rights and accessibility are some of his greatest passions, as evidenced by the prioritization of accessibility projects both in

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Kirby Park and across the city. The scope of the projects in Kirby Park are outlined in greater detail in the site visit report (attached), but I will mention the projects most relevant to this request here. Last year, a brand new, ADA-accessible playground was completed in the park. In addition to being accessible to children and adults who use a wheelchair, the graded play surface and sensory stations also make this area welcoming to children with autism. Many of the recent ADA improvements, like newly renovated pathways connecting different pavillions throughout the park, also make the park easier for families to enjoy with young children who need to utilize a stroller or a wagon. The walkways were funded with Community Development Block Grants while the playground was funded with a mixture of grants and individual donations from local families.

The City of Wilkes-Barre is requesting \$204,575 to install ADA-accessible walkways around the pond in Kirby Park, as well as an accessible pier. The pond sits immediately next to the largest pavillion in the park and could benefit from some TLC. The Luzerne County Flood Authority is responsible for the maintenance of the pond and has applied for a grant to revitalize the pond with an updated filtration system. Currently, only one side of the pond is accessible with walkways; the proposed 6-foot walkways that encircle the entire pond would be a new addition. While the size of the pond might not attract the most skilled fisherman, the pier will offer a place for a parent to share a love of the outdoors with a child through fishing, reading, or having a picnic while looking out at the freshly cleared water. The proposed pier will be 15 feet by 10 feet in size with handrails and will be accessible to wheelchairs and strollers. Once funding for this project is secured, the City is hopeful that work can begin quickly and continue through much of the winter, pending weather conditions, so that the project will be completed by spring.

The requested fishing pier and walkway installation is just one of many projects that will not only make the park more beautiful, but will also make it more accessible to people of all abilities. Contributing to Kirby Park's revitalization seems an appropriate way to celebrate the park's 100th anniversary and honor one of the most significant philanthropic gifts Fred Morgan Kirby made to the City of Wilkes-Barre. The addition of a pier will offer members of the community a new way to enjoy Kirby Park for the next 100 years. I support the full cost of the project, at \$204,575.

JUSTIN J. KICZEK COMMENTS: I am glad to see the inclusion of walkways around the entire pond, which, in my opinion, has actually more recreational value than the pier itself (rather small at 15' x 10'). With a defined path, the banks of the pond would be less likely to see wear and tear, staying more attractive. With a full loop around the water, park visitors will be much more enticed to take in the full circumference of the pond as part of a walk, run, or bike ride, which brings physical health benefits. Additionally, regarding mental health, the calming properties of being near water, even a very small pond, are profound and backed by science. Moreover, such an experience is not just limited to those who are able-bodied. The fact that it will be graded for wheelchair and stroller use make it all the more attractive. Overall, I think both the pier and the walkway will elevate the pond's function within Kirby Park. I'll note that, when we visited the Park on 9/25/23, there were not plans for a walkway around the pond, as the city was not sure how it would be funded. The higher figure shared by the Foundation with Wilkes-Barre helped make this dream a reality.

It has been a pleasure working with the city on this project, and coming in to the project on the later side, we have been able to help get them to the finish line in terms of improvements for the 100th

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anniversary. The city officials have been very resourceful in their fundraising and budget building, turning to Community Development Block Grants and county funds to make improvements to the park.

I recommend meeting the full cost of the project with a grant of \$204,575.

DISPOSITION:

- Declination
- Hold for review on/about:
- Approval for: **\$204,575**
- Recommended Grant Payment(s):
2023: \$204,575
- Hold for Board Review
- Payee Other Than Addressee:
- Insert Information: **Toward construction of an ADA-accessible fishing pier and pond walkway at Kirby Park**
- Other:

Initials: JK

Date: 11/29/2023

Check # _____

Date: _____

NOTES

FMKF Meeting with City of Wilkes-Barre officials, re: Kirby Park

September 25, 2023



We met the team from the City of Wilkes-Barre in the 50-acre Kirby Park, the biggest park in the city. The team was comprised of Joyce Zaykowski, Director of Economic and Community Development; Mark Barry, City Grants Coordinator; Mike Slusser, Director of Special Events; and Robert Brown, Mayor. We met at the concession stand, adjoining the football field. By appearance, the concession stand has not been in use by human hands for some time, and hornets have taken over at least one wall. Joyce noted that the junior football league that uses the practice field has expressed interest in renting the concessions stand to use during their games. As we strode into the park, Mark was quick to point out a few more ADA adjustments they would like to make to the walkways (the less recently renovated walkways are now a rather rough asphalt and likely somewhat challenging or uneven with a wheelchair or stroller). We proceeded to the recently completed ADA-compatible children's playground. Mayor Brown explained that he has two passions: veterans issues and people with

disabilities. His passion for people with disabilities was evident as he talked about the history of this project. Mayor Brown and his team worked with families with children with disabilities in designing the park, which, according to the team, is packed with families, though, given the chilly rain, was empty on this particular day. The entire project cost \$600K, much of which was put into the graded, soft play surface. The playground – which is made up of 16 stations or play features – includes two ADA-accessible zip lines, sensory stations for children with autism, and ADA-accessible swings. While taking in the playground, the Wilkes Barre team helped explain how diverse funding streams are helping them make improvements to the park. Joyce accessed Community Development Block Grants to develop the various walkways that now connect pavilions and playgrounds. For the playground itself, Mayor Brown and his team raised the



funds from various private sources, one being the All One Foundation. Touchingly, Mayor Brown shared that many families came together to raise funds through hot dog sales and bake sales.

At this juncture, Mayor Brown and Joyce shared more about the ADA-compliant bathroom that is to be built right near the playground. Explaining that it is not uncommon for children with severe disabilities to need to change diapers and clothes after having an accident, Mayor Brown imparted on us the importance of having facilities that can allow a caregiver to clean up and change a child, so the bathrooms are designed to including shower and changing spaces, along with bigger bathrooms to accommodate wheelchairs and other mobility devices. The team agreed that more thought must be put in to locking mechanisms to ensure privacy and to prevent the bathrooms, showers, and changing facilities from being misused.



We next walked to the pondside pavilion with a grand and high-arching roof. Here, Joyce laid out the possibilities for the fishing pier. Mayor Brown was quick to point out that the fishing pier would be another amenity designed with people with disabilities in mind, as it would have a walkway and ramp that would allow for wheelchair users to access the pier and enjoy being close to water. Luzerne County is planning on cleaning up the pond itself. They pointed out some cattails on the other side of the pond as one area to be cleaned up. While there was no sign of algae, the pond itself was cloudy. No one really knew what kind of

fish lurk in there, but it was agreed that fishing here would be more for children and not really for true sportsmen/women. The projected cost of the pier and adjoining walkways is \$250K.

Last, we walked to the other end of the park to see the ten tennis courts, which are in very good shape. Even on a very gloomy, rainy morning, two tennis players were hoping against hope to hit some balls. Mike pointed out that the tennis courts get a lot of use, including by King's College. Here, we also learned a bit more about the Army Corps of Engineers levee system, which is designed to hold back the Susquehanna River.

As we made our way back to the parking lot, we stopped by the current maintenance sheds, which are set to be demolished imminently. They will be



replaced by a pole barn structure that will house the metal fencing that is deployed in the case of flood danger. Its position here, in the park, will allow city workers to deploy the barriers more quickly and efficiently. This facility will also house maintenance equipment (such as lawnmowers) and men's and women's bathrooms.

We wrapped up our conversation in the parking lot, where we shared with the team the Kirby Alliance's suggestion that the anniversary celebration be held in September. There seemed to be general agreement that this was a good time, though Mike said that he would need to just check on a few other regularly scheduled September events / activities (as well as holidays, such as potentially Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). We shared that, apart from Labor Day weekend, the other weekends of September so far look good. The team asked if we would have any particular needs in the park that day, and we were not aware of any. The Wilkes-Barre team offered to let us know soon about a date.

Finally, Gina and I encouraged Joyce to make a request to the Foundation for the full amount of the fishing pier project. Joyce plans on asking her current bidders for the restroom projects to submit secondary bids for the fishing pier project. Gina and Joyce will talk more soon.

