

## **MAYOR REPORT – Rick Eberlin, City of Grafton**

June 2018

The City of Grafton has had a great year and with no high water to deal with this year we expect bigger and better things to happen this year. We have experienced a significant increase in revenues and have cut expenses tremendously. The 2018 tourist season kicked off with the opening of the Grafton Ferry on the last weekend of April. Raging Rivers Water Park opened on Memorial Day weekend and has experienced excellent weather thus far. We wish them continued success this summer!

Grafton's 4th of July Fireworks will take place on Saturday, June 30. There is a change of venue from the east end of town where they were launched last year to the central part near the ball diamond, behind the Hawg Pit. Please come early and bring lawn chairs and stay to enjoy a beautiful fireworks display.

Residents of Grafton are anxiously awaiting the opening of the Grafton Market formerly known as Jimbo's. It has been approximately seven years since Grafton has had a store. The new owners will carry groceries, package liquor, general hardware and camping supplies. They're hoping for a late June or early July opening.

Cassen's Bait Shop has new owners, Brad and Rachel Lutes of Jerseyville. They have changed the name to Lutes Bait and Escape. In addition to the wide assortment of bait and tackle that was carried before, they have also expanded their grocery selection as well as various other products. Additional overnight stays were constructed on the backside of the establishment and are available on a nightly basis. Brad and Rachel work extremely hard and we are happy to have them in Grafton.

The City Council has been very busy with numerous projects going on throughout the city. Our TIF runs out at the conclusion of 2018 and all monies have to be spent by the end of November. Thus far citizens have witnessed concrete work installed around the Lighthouse, three new docks put in at the public launch area and portable restroom trailers installed at The Grove Park. Playground equipment has also been purchased and will be installed very soon.

13 building lots were purchased from Jersey State Bank and added to the 26 the City of Grafton had previously owned. With those 39 lots we have developed an incentive program. If a person purchases a lot for \$5,000 and builds a home within two years they will receive the \$5,000 back. However, if a home is not built in the two year time frame only \$4,000 of the original \$5,000 will be returned. We're hoping to attract young professional couples who want to start families here and enroll their children in our state of the art grade school.

Next week, work will begin on the turtle sculpture in the southwest corner of Lighthouse Park. Three sculptors from St. Louis will create a 10 by 15 snapping turtle with a frog on its back and two huge catfish swimming around it just out of reach. It is estimated that when completed this beautiful work of art will weigh approximately 40 tons. Best of all, it will be a beautiful attraction to our riverfront and kid friendly. In addition, thanks to a partnership between Illinois American Water and the City of Grafton there will be an 80 foot flagpole placed near the lighthouse. This flagpole will be dedicated to honor the service of our huge veteran population that exists in Grafton and also to commemorate the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers.

Ambulance service will be returning to Grafton in the very near future. Jersey State Bank made a huge contribution towards helping us bring that service back to Grafton. Jersey Community Hospital will provide that ambulance and staff which will share space with the police department. A room will be remodeled at City Hall to accommodate those paramedics. Thank you Jim Hoefert and Jersey State Bank as well as Jon Wade and Jersey Community Hospital. When you have a town that goes from 652 people to 5,000 to 10,000 on the weekends, an ambulance is needed.

After Ameren gas completes their work in town, new sidewalks, streets, curbs and gutters, and general city maintenance will begin in earnest. These projects have had to be put on the back burner until their work was complete.

I saved the best news for last. The Grafton City Council approved to go forward with a sky tram in Grafton. The sky tram will include both open chair lifts and enclosed handicap accessible cars. Passengers will board near Grove Park and travel slowly up the beautiful hillside to Aeries Winery and Resorts. Included in this project will be a citywide trolley that will be Grafton's first form of public transportation. Residents and tourists alike will be able to jump on the trolley and travel about town and leave their car parked in one of the many city lots.

Grafton will always have the many fine eating and entertainment venues throughout town. They anxiously await having the opportunity to meet and serve you. Each establishment is truly unique in its own way. Please come for a visit or stay for a lifetime!