

# Rotary Club donation helps with Homewood park redesign

BY MARILYN THOMAS  
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Homewood Estates Park got its official reopening on July 19. Members of the Homewood Rotary Foundation joined with park officials to unveil Rotary Fields and celebrate with an ice cream party.

The Homewood-Flossmoor Park District gave the park, at 18200 California Ave., a complete makeover using a \$70,000 donation from Homewood Rotary. The park district got a \$292,700 Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources “that was like doubling our money,” said Brent Bachus,

park board president. The local funding on the project was \$224,700.

Mary Hollie, president of Homewood Rotary, said the organization was happy to support the park district initiative because the Rotary’s work is “about kids, about family, it’s about connections and what better way to do that than at a park. We wanted to be a part of this wonderful project. This way we could really touch the heart and the soul of Homewood.”

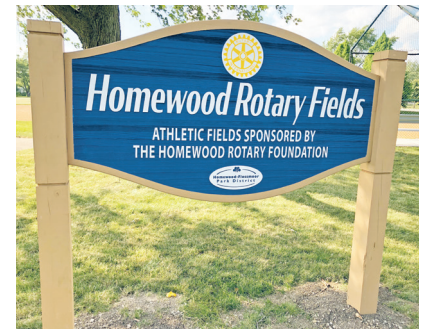
Hollie said the ball fields’ blue sign with white lettering and the Rotary logo, is more than a recognition of a donation.

“Really our sign is about welcoming people to come to the park, connect and feel that sense of belonging to the community,” Hollie said.

In 2019, the park board selected Homewood Estates Park for an update and solicited feedback from the community.

“We just had an amazing turnout from the community with feedback and input on what they wanted this park to look like,” Bachus said. The Homewood Rotary Foundation’s gift allowed the park district to redesign the baseball fields by reducing them from three to two, and adding a pond to the landscaping.

The playground area got all new equipment, the youth soccer field was upgraded, the walking path was redesigned and a new permanent shelter replaced a portable tent.



Marilyn Thomas/H-F Chronicle  
A sign at the ball fields at Homewood Estates Park acknowledges the generous gift from the Homewood Rotary Foundation that helped cover improvement costs.

# H-F Park District learns of spiking costs for ice arena work

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Costs for work on the H-F Ice Arena are going up as consultants find the project is being affected by delays in getting needed materials and rising labor costs.

Construction management services consultants John Emser and Chris Powell of W.B. Olson Inc. shared the bad news with the Homewood-Flossmoor Park District Board of Commissioners during a June 28 special board meeting.

The ice arena, at 777 Kedzie Ave. in Flossmoor, was shut down in November 2021 when the refrigeration system failed. Despite staff’s best attempts, the dated system couldn’t be repaired. The park board moved immediately to start the process to get a new refrigeration system. The improvement requires a number of additional changes, including building a new structure for mechanicals.

The project was budgeted at \$6.5 million and the board is financing the

work through a \$5.5 million bond issue and intended to use \$1 million from the park district’s fund balance.

“Unfortunately, due to cost increases and the budget overages, the current project cost is \$7.1 million,” Debbie Kopas, parks executive director, told the Chronicle. “We are currently looking for every way possible to reduce the \$7.1 million. Any remaining overages will have to come from donations, sponsorships, naming rights, grants, or additional fund balance.”

Emser said the increases aren’t just hitting the ice arena project. He is seeing it across the board on his company’s projects.

“Some of the costs have just rocketed,” he said. “It doesn’t seem to be abating.” What he and Powell are finding is that it is a very busy time for contractors, so they can charge premium prices. Estimated costs provided to the park district board two or three months ago no longer apply.

Powell said some materials have a 10- to 12-month wait time. The opening for

the ice arena is “a moving target,” he said, but the consultants are trying to find ways to get it open in winter while waiting for certain materials that are not considered crucial to the ice arena’s operation.

The park district ordered the \$2.9 million refrigeration system in March. At the June 28 board meeting it accepted a \$1,144,000 bid from Key West Mechanical for the mechanical scope of work. The bid was 3.6% higher than anticipated.

The park district is constructing a new building adjacent to the ice arena that will house the mechanical equipment. It accepted a \$127,730 bid from Baumgartner Construction for the excavation of the site for the building, and demolition work inside the ice arena that will get the rink space prepared for the new refrigeration system. The bid was 21% higher than anticipated.

Reichelt Plumbing’s \$212,800 bid won the contract for plumbing work. The bid was 10.8% higher than anticipated.

The site utility work went to Alessio & Sons Co. at a cost of \$161,400. The bid was 20% higher than anticipated.

The final bid for electrical work was awarded to Meany Electric. The \$249,900 bid was more than 200% over the budget of \$81,000, but Kopas explained to the board that that wasn’t a fair comparison because the scope of the work changed greatly with add-ons for two large electrical feeds, additional disconnects and electrical work in the sump pits.

Emser said although the park district has accepted bids March 28, June 11 and June 28, there is still other work that will require outside contractors, but the costs won’t be as high as those bids the board already approved.

For example, the park district needs a carpenter who can build a short wall around the rink to fill a gap between the ice and new dasher boards. Emser said he is recommending the park district negotiate a price for the additional work, rather than going for the expected three bids.

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