Nettles Park receives long-awaited facelift

BY GREG OLIVER
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CLEMSON — Clemson Parks and Recreation Director Steve Figueroa admits upgrading restroom and concession facilities at Nettles Park has been a major issue for a long time.

"We had a real need to upgrade the restroom facilities for the adult softball fields because the building they're housed in has never functioned for us with the limited storage and design," Figueroa said.

Figueroa said improving those facilities, as part of the Parks and Rec department's master plan update, involved selecting a design-build team and construction team. Trehel Corporation and RSCT Architects, both of Clemson, were selected for the project.

While any construction or renovation project brings a certain amount of stress, this project brought more than Figueroa planned when the discovery was made that the flood delineation had changed — moving the flood plain closer and including the existing structure. That meant the design would have to include a different set of codes and specifications, resulting in a $250,000 cost jumping to $400,000.

Although several options were explored, Figueroa said a plan was developed to construct the new restrooms away from the flood plain and closer to the Kilgore playground. As a result, the current concession and press box area could be renovated into a storage area.

"The bottom line is that we're getting a new restroom facility with an increased amount of fixtures inside to accommodate more people and make it more functional and attractive," he said. "There is an increased cost and we're right at a number not to exceed $255,000 instead of $240,000. But it's lower than what we projected when we got into the project, realizing it was in a flood plain and meeting all these codes."

While Figueroa admits the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) might have granted an exception, he added the flood plain discovery took place at the same time Hurricane Sandy hit the East Coast and caused so much flood damage.

"I can sit here and tell people that when the creek flooded, it never got to the level of the building, just the field, but was told New York City had never experienced flooding on the Subway system before Sandy," Figueroa said. "We felt everyone would be best served to move the project out of the flood plain."

The Parks and Rec director said concession improvements would result in increased storage and a better line of sight from the press box since the current one has limitations for viewing the field.

Figueroa said the project is scheduled for completion in April, prior to the start of adult softball season.

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