

# 'Little bit of good news'



Seneca city administrator Scott Moulder points out plans to Mayor Dan Alexander for a park at part of the former Harper's Five and Dime store property.

JERRY BEARD | THE JOURNAL

## Seneca administrator announces \$2.5M state grant

**BY NORM CANNADA**  
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**SENECA** — The city of Seneca has been awarded a \$2.5 million grant officials plan to use to recreate downtown space that was home to two

buildings that have become dilapidated over the past decade or more.

City administrator Scott Moulder announced Tuesday that the state grant was included in the state budget this year, providing reimbursements for some of the \$8 million the

city spent on tornado relief after an EF3 tornado hit the southern part of the city in April 2020.

The money will be used to continue work to change the look of the

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# GRANT: To help with park plan

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former Harper's Five and Dime and Kimbrell's properties across from City Hall.

"It's a little bit of good news for the city," Moulder told city council Tuesday night. "It is predominantly to replace what we would have used to do the buildings across the street. So we now have a \$2.5 million grant as a reimbursement that we'll use to complete the projects across the street."

The city submitted \$8 million in expenses to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for damage from the tornado. Most of the damage was to Seneca Light and Water's electrical grid.

"Our guess is, we may get back about \$5 million, so this \$2.5 million will help with that," Moulder said.

## HARPER'S WORK UNDERWAY

Most of the Harper's building has already come down. Moulder said plans call for "a family-friendly, urban-style park" with outdoor restaurant seating.

"Our hope is to have a small little playground in there," he said. "It will be a really cool family-friendly hang-out area where the community can get together and grow."

The remaining indoor space, which includes the original building, will be renovated for businesses.

"Our goal is to turn those buildings back into beautiful, structured, safe shells that we would then sell," Mould-

er said. "What we will have done is made these marketable structures that are now cost-feasible for a private developer to come in and invest their money and put it back to life and put businesses in there."

Mayor pro tem Ronnie O'Kelley called the work "amazing."

"I walk the town at least four nights a week," he said. "Just the other night, I'm walking and I saw a couple from Keowee Key who said, 'I wonder what they're doing.' I stopped and told them what we're doing."

Mayor Dan Alexander said while he and O'Kelley have great memories of the buildings in the past, the changes are exciting.

"We have a lot of great memories, but the last 10 or 15 years there hasn't been a lot of activity on this," he said. "We needed to do something. It's taken a long time to get to this point."

Moulder, who credited Sen. Thomas Alexander and Rep. Bill Sandifer with helping the city receive the funding, said he hopes the money will be available "within 30 to 60 days," allowing more work to be done in the coming months.

"I don't know if (the Harper's building) will be complete before Christmas, but I feel we'll be well on our way by the holidays," he said. "With Kimbrell's, my goal is to have at least the demolition done this year, and I'm hoping completed by the end of the year."