



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Joint Committee on Finance Approves Knowles Nelson Grant Funds on Hold Since 2019

MADISON-- The Joint Committee on Finance convened on Thursday for a solo hearing requesting approval of a \$911,810 Knowles-Nelson Stewardship grant to the City of Appleton for the development of the Lawe Street Trestle Trail first awarded nearly two years ago. The committee voted Thursday 16-0 to approve \$700,000. The long held up funding on the project, which was completed in 2020 without the promised funding, caused concern that the cost would have to be made up from the taxpayers.

Today's vote is a big victory for the City of Appleton and one that Representative Lee Snodgrass (D-Appleton) has been working towards since she took office. It was then that Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation, Tom Flick, reached out for her assistance. "It astounded me that the state could award stewardship grants, a community would then budget and plan around it, and then the funds could be denied anonymously and without explanation. I made it my personal mission to draw attention to the project and the value it has already via trail connectivity, and to highlight a flawed process which put Appleton taxpayers at risk for having to foot the bill that the state said it would pay," said Snodgrass.

"The City of Appleton and the Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Management Department are ecstatic to have been awarded funding to assist with the construction costs of the Lawe Street Trestle Bridge and Trail Project. The City is grateful to the State and DNR for being selected as an award recipient. The Knowles-Nelson funding was a catalyst for the project to become possible. Without this funding the City would take on additional debt and have to push back or eliminate other quality of life and community enrichment projects," said Deputy Director Tom Flick.

In 2019, the city of Appleton received approval for a Knowles-Nelson grant to help transform an abandoned Canadian National Rail trestle into a multimodal, ADA lighted trail spanning the Fox River. The project provides an integral connection to the existing North Island Trail, Newberry trail, Neenah Papers and bike lanes west and south on Lawe Street in downtown Appleton. Although the project was completed in July of 2020, Appleton never received the grant money due to an anonymous objection over the \$911,810 price tag leaving city leaders and local lawmakers in the dark until today.



Knowles-Nelson Stewardship grants allow municipalities to utilize funds for trail development, wildlife preservation, and restoration, and nature-based outdoor recreation. Appleton's Lawe Street Trestle is part of a comprehensive trail plan which will promote outdoor enjoyment, quality of life and economic development in the area. The Governor's budget invested in extending the program for another 10 years at 70 million a year but was removed by the Republican controlled Joint committee on Finance on May 6, 2020 and have not yet unveiled their stewardship plan.

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