

New entrance/exit for Coleman Memorial Park in Lebanon

Improvement is one of many underway at the historic park.

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Lebanon Daily News

UPDATED: 07/17/2013 11:07:28 AM EDT



Brian Grumbine (left) and Jared Balsbaugh of Woodland Contractors smooth cement into a footer being poured by Pennsy Supply truck driver David Horn at the new entrance to Coleman Memorial Park in Lebanon on Tuesday. The old entrance will be converted into an exit allowing easier access to Route 72. (JOHN LATIMER)

Improvements are being made to Lebanon's Coleman Memorial Park entrance that included adding an exit onto Route 72.

The construction at the entrance began earlier this month by Woodland Contractors and included adding a southbound turning lane from Route 72 into the city-owned park.

Other work will include construction of a new entrance over which will be installed a replica of the iron "Coleman Memorial Park" sign that enshrines the current entrance, which will become the park's exit, said Lebanon's director of public works, Gordon Kirkessner.

"We are not changing the current entrance," he said. "But it will become the new exit. The two pillars and the two curving walls, and the metal frame sign over top will be duplicated for the new entrance."

One minor change will be the relocation of a planter that holds a wooden sign that advertises upcoming events at the park so that it is centered between the old and new pillars, Kirkessner said.

The future of the sign is still to be determined, he said. If it can be refurbished it will be. Otherwise a new sign will be built.

"If we are going to all this trouble we want to have a nice sign at the entrance," Kirkessner said.

The new entrance should be paved by the end of the month allowing the old entrance to serve as an exit accessible from Krauss Road, the street behind the park's miniature golf course.

The existing exit at the bottom of Furnace Hill Road will remain and continue to funnel traffic east towards North 12th Street and downtown Lebanon.

There are no plans to install a traffic signal at the entrance just yet. But that could change in the future, Kirkessner added.

The entrance construction is one of several improvement projects underway at the historic 100-acre park that once held the mansions of the Coleman family, who made their fortunes in the iron industry during the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries.

They are also the first upgrades since the creation of a master plan in 2011 that suggested many possible improvements to the park, including renovating the Carriage House, the last remaining major structure from the Coleman-era.

The work is being paid for with a pair of grants the park trustees received last year. One for \$225,000 from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the other a \$576,450 grant from the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority, also known as PennVEST.

The Lebanon County commissioners and the city also contributed \$15,000 each to the multi-faceted and environmentally-friendly project which included terracing and landscaping Veterans Memorial Amphitheater.

That work is nearly finished, as are improvements to the amphitheater's upper parking lot, where an underground cistern has been constructed to catch storm water run-off for later use like watering the nearby baseball fields.

In a month or two a new parking lot for about 35 vehicles, with a porous surface to eliminate stormwater run-off, will be constructed in the western portion of the park, near the band shell, Kirkessner said.

Work will continue next year with the remainder of the grants to be spent on installing new playground equipment, building wheelchair-accessible walking trails, and adding new pavilions on the park's western end.

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