



The Times

House OKs funds for local projects

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HAMILTON -- A federal appropriations bill passed by the House of Representatives last Thursday allocates \$500,000 in funds to Isles Inc.'s Mill One revitalization project and unspecified funds for two Assunpink Creek improvement projects.

Funding for all three projects was requested for inclusion in the 2010 Energy and Water Appropriations Bill by U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, R-Hamilton.

The \$500,000 for the Mill One project will go toward a solar project and other sustainability initiatives at the ambitious Isles Inc. project, Smith said.

The Trenton-based nonprofit group will be transforming an old textile mill near the Trenton-Hamilton border into a 240,000-square-foot mixed-use "sustainable urban village" that will include business and residential spaces, art studios and office and classroom space, not to mention solar and thermal panels and a roof with a functional garden.

Hamilton Mayor John Bencivengo's recently released plans for an arts-and-cultural district that include the Mill One project as the district's anchor in the southern section of the township.

"Mill One's renewable-energy plan tapping solar power is a good example of the environmentally friendly building practices we need to see in new construction. This federal funding helps advance those conservation principles," Smith said.

The \$500,000 is in addition to another \$238,000 in federal appropriations secured by Smith last year.

The legislation also requests an unspecified amount of funds from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for two projects in Hamilton and Trenton related to the Assunpink Creek. The projects would require at least partial funding from the corps.

Congress is asking the corps for improvements that could prevent some of the flooding problems in Hamilton related to the portion of the creek that flows near Sweet Briar and Rutgers avenues, according to Jeff Sagnip, a spokesman for Smith.

That area of the township has long been prone to flooding, he said, and the estimated \$4 million improvement project could help restore natural wetlands and address creek flow and flooding issues.

Another corps project would involve "daylighting" a portion of the Assunpink that runs under the South Broad Street culvert in Trenton, a project that could cost up to \$6.7 million.

"Daylighting" refers to the process of opening up an underground stream to natural sunlight, restoring the creek, and any of its wildlife populations, to "a more natural state," Sagnip said.

Though already passed in the House, the bill still awaits Senate approval, which is expected, Sagnip said.

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