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# SPOTLIGHT ON GOVERNMENT

## Grants await gov's sig

### If OK'd, \$882K will help various groups

BY DAVID BEARD The Dominion Post

GRANT highlights, Page 3-A.

Fifteen area legislators are seeking \$881,898 in state grants for schools, fire departments, libraries and other nonprofit agencies in Monongalia, Preston and Marion counties.

The money, once Gov. Joe Manchin approves it, will come through Community Participation Grants — a process that replaced the politicized and much criticized Budget Digest in 2006.

Individual grant recommendations range from \$40,000 for Morgantown High School to \$166 for the Mannington Landmark Commission.

For some agencies, the grants are their lifeblood.

“Without them, our program would be nonexistent,” Art George, Trout for Cheat chairman, said. Legislators are seeking four grants totaling \$25,000 to continue the organization’s mission of stocking the Cheat River with trout.

For other agencies, the money provides an extra boost to their budgets, to help projects along.

“It’s those extra things that you wouldn’t put in your budget,” Mon County Schools Superintendent Frank Devono said. For instance, parent organizations raised money for a project but need more. Instead of fundraising and saving over the course of years, these grants can speed up the process.

Mon schools are recommended to receive 15 grants totaling \$114,000, if all are approved, for such things as facility and technology upgrades, playground equipment and a journalism contest.

And for others, a grant is just another piece in a funding package for a project ranging from remodeling to full-fledged construction.

For instance, Granville Volunteer Fire Department is in line for a \$3,500 grant to build a new fire station.

Assistant Chief Robert Scott said the VFD has also applied for a \$5 million FEMA grant for the proposed new station.

He said plans are already drawn up. The new station, which would go up in front of the current one, would have more space for equipment and separate restroom, locker and shower facilities for men and women. Everything is unisex in the current station.

Lawmakers team up

Legislators from the same districts will often team up on their requests and pool their funding. Marion County’s three 43rd District delegates each obtained initial approval for 26 identical grants, essentially tripling the funding to each.

Mon’s four 44th District delegates also team up, but not in the same way. They pool all their requests and reach a consensus on which ones they’ll submit for approval.

“Teamwork is something I learned about as a member of the WVU football team,” said Delegate Alex Shook, D-Monongalia. “By working together, our four Monongalia County delegates maximize the effect of the Community Participation Projects (CPP) by

prioritizing projects that will most benefit our community.”

### How it works

This is compiled from explanations by the West Virginia Development Office and the House and Senate Finance Committees.

Funding is provided in four categories: EMS/VFD services, education, libraries and senior services. They can fund anything from regular services to authorized construction projects.

Agencies submit their requests to their legislators, who then must choose which to pass on to their respective finance committee — House or Senate. The committees and their respective chamber leaders review the requests to make sure they're qualified.

Legislators are notified about which projects receive initial approval. The Department of Commerce Development Office sends paperwork to the various agencies.

“Included in this ... is a mechanism to encourage local participation in some form, whether in-kind, local funding, federal funding, etc.,” Michael Cook, of the Senate Finance Committee, said.

When the paperwork is returned, the applications are considered by the governor for approval, and the governor's office sends out letters. The Development Office then enters into a contract with the agency.

The old Budget Digest was considered a pork program, various officials said, and power played a part in how much pork came home.

“We have developed an alternative way to help community projects that are struggling by creating a mechanism to allow members to make the needs in their districts known,” said Stacey Ruckle, House communications director. “We want a fair and equitable system that operates in tandem with the Senate.”

The grant funding is broken into two equal pools, half for the House, half for the Senate. Each legislator may request an equal amount — up to \$66,700 for the House this time.

But since there are 99 delegates and only 34 senators, senators get more money per person.

“We do not want community groups depending on this money for their operating budgets — it should be a way to provide grants to local entities in need,” Ruckle said.

So, while that's not always the case — Trout for Cheat for example — the grants can sometimes help agencies out of certain jams.

“For example,” said Delegate Barbara Evans Fleischauer, D-Mon, “CPP funds will help the [Mon County] Historical Society put a flood wall around the Easton Roller Mill.” The proposed grant is for \$11,500.

Without that “funding to prevent further flood damage at the Easton Roller Mill, we could risk losing one of our most valuable local historical landmarks.”

## GRANT HIGHLIGHTS

These Community Participation Grants were approved by the House and Senate Finance Committees and await the governor's approval.

For a complete list, go to [dominionpost.com](http://dominionpost.com) and click on the link.

- Sundale Nursing Home, 15-room hospice addition, \$30,000 (two grants)
- Morgantown Public Library, create Star City branch, \$12,000 (two grants)
- Morgantown farmers market, open-air pavil-

ion, \$15,000 (two grants)

■ Monongalia County Board of Education, \$114,000 (15 grants)

■ Preston County Board of Education, \$48,150 (nine grants)

■ PACE TEC construction, \$58,000 (three grants)

■ Marion County Senior Citizens, \$20,001 (three grants)

■ Senior Monongalians, \$42,000 (three grants)

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