

Pound revitalization among grant winners
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Coalfield Progress

To say Pound Mayor Sarah “Jackie” Gilliam had a good day Friday is a bit of an understatement.

While at her town hall office late that afternoon, Gilliam received a phone call from Ron Flanary, executive director of the Lenowisco Planning District Commission. While she was on the phone, someone passing by her office may have heard a weeping Gilliam exclaiming:

“Oh, praise the Lord, praise the Lord! Oh Ron, we got it!”

At least that’s what Gilliam recalls saying when Flanary told her the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development granted \$700,000 to a proposed downtown revitalization project in Pound. That’s the most a project like the Pound revitalization is eligible to win under the community development block grant program.

Gilliam wasn’t the only happy public official Friday afternoon. Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine announced nearly \$10 million in block grants Friday for a variety of projects, including sewer projects in the Bold Camp area of Wise County and in Dungannon.

Other communities received letters of intent, including St. Paul for its own downtown revitalization project. That means their projects will be funded after they meet certain requirements set forth by DHCD.

The block grant program serves communities with high numbers of low- to moderate-income residents, and support community and economic development projects, water and sewer projects, downtown revitalization and health care programs.

But for Pound, and for most of the 18 other communities that received good news Friday, the DHCD block grants are only a piece of the pie. Also required will be money from local governments, private investors and other agencies, like the state departments of health and transportation, the Virginia Tobacco Commission and special General Assembly funds.

Plus, plenty of planning and messy construction will be required to make projects a reality.

Gilliam realizes that, and so does Pound’s town manager, Bobby Dorton. “Bobby was happy, but he also said, ‘Now our work really begins,’” Gilliam recalled during a Monday telephone interview.

Gilliam noted that DHCD officials will get in touch with the town soon to go over the next steps in the grant funding process.

Funding breakdown

Here’s a list of local projects and their funding plans.

- Pound revitalization. The project is set to include façades for 25 storefronts, about 33,000 feet of broadband conduit, replacement concrete curb and guttering in the downtown core, new storm drainage and new water and sewer lines. Also planned is a restructuring of the town’s economy to take advantage of tourism from the Crooked Road heritage music trail.

The total project cost, according to a DHCD press release, is set at about \$1.76 million, \$700,000 of which will be covered by the block grant. About \$349,000 of that will be money from the private sector, while \$117,000 will be provided by the locality. The rest will be sought from VDOT, the rural broadband initiative, the Virginia Tobacco Commission, the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority and the state health department.

- Bold Camp sewer. About \$947,000 in block grant funding will help provide sewer service for about 356 people who live in the Right Fork section of Bold Camp, near Pound. In addition to \$62,500 from Wise County, other funds are expected to come from the Southern Rivers wastewater program for the \$1.5 million project.

Many of the homes in the area straight-pipe into the water system or have non-conforming septic systems, the release notes.

In addition to 15,500 feet of 4-inch sewer line and 24,000 of 2-inch sewer line, about 125 wastewater treatment systems will be installed.

- St. Paul revitalization. St. Paul's downtown revitalization project includes not only business district façades, but also the relocation of 12 homes, the restoration of 11 substandard apartments, an adaptive reuse of the Willis Building and renovation of the historic Hillman House. Also planned as part of the project are new streetlights, landscaping and signs.

DHCD has provided a letter of intent for \$991,104 for the \$3.7 million project, and about \$230,000 in private funds and \$801,000 in local funds have been promised. Other funds will be sought from the tobacco commission, the Appalachian Regional Commission, VCEDA and VDOT.

The Friday press release did not indicate what requirements must be met before funding will be provided.

- Cassell's Chapel Clinic wastewater extension. DHCD will provide \$200,000 toward a sewer extension in the town of Dungannon. The \$676,000 project will provide public sewer service to 16 homes that currently have straight-pipe sewer systems or non-conforming septic tanks. It will also provide sewer service for a new medical clinic.

About \$10,000 in private funds has been promised for the project, and about \$466,000 from the Southern Rivers wastewater program will be sought to pay for the rest.