

Guided by care for their community, Malta officials reflect on local development and growth

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By Emily Stokes

Nestled along the Muskingum River, the Village of Malta lies surrounded by scenic views and historic landmarks. As settlers arrived along the Muskingum headwaters in 1761, locals utilized a system of dams and locks to navigate waterways.

Deriving its name from an ex-sailor who visited the Island of Malta in the Mediterranean, the first lots in Malta were mapped out in 1816.



Mayor Terry McGrath joined Malta City Council in 2004 and was there until 2022, when he became mayor and is now in his first full term. McGrath said he's been in management since the late 70s and has evolved and continued to work in the field.

Village Administrator Bill Smith says the previous mayor convinced him to get involved. After growing up around Malta, he enjoys doing whatever he can to help the area grow.

"It's a fun job most of the time, a good place to work," Smith said.

With the Mayors' Partnership for Progress, McGrath said the village has received connections to grant opportunities and support for projects like a review of Malta's current water plant.

McGrath said with the plant getting close to 25 years old, technology has changed. The Mayors' Partnership provided technical assistance for the initial survey to figure out what the village is starting with and what is feasible.

"We truly appreciate it," McGrath said. "The meetings are very informative. You realize that all the other villages and cities have the same issues that you have."

Growth and Development

McGrath says although the area has traditionally been home to an older population, family homes are more recently being occupied by working families, spurring local development.

“There wasn’t hardly any jobs, people moving out, going to college and so on,” McGrath said. “There was nothing to come back to.”

McGrath said changes in the workforce could also be attributed to more people commuting to work.

“Driving is not such a big hassle anymore,” McGrath said. “You can get out and go about any place. People get used to that, and so it’s changed in that respect.”

Other development includes local businesses in masonry and cabinetry. Schaad Custom Cabinetry specifically bought the Muskingum Valley grocery building and added two additional, larger buildings to the structure, McGrath said.

Malta also hosted the Zanesville-Muskingum Riverfest, drawing out visitors from both areas to enjoy evenings of music on the river.

In terms of recreation, Malta also received a grant for an ADA-accessible kayak launch onto the Muskingum River which McGrath said has received a substantial amount of use.

Updated Water Infrastructure

Malta recently completed a water line project, updating critical infrastructure for area residents. Most water lines in the area are newer lines, making the village up to date on sewer separation and water access. Next, McGrath says, is revamping or remodeling the local water treatment plant.

McGrath says for a small community, state and federal funding is incredibly important for large-scale projects such as this one.

“But, being kind of a retirement area, you just can’t assess each homeowner with all that,” McGrath said. “A lot of people are debating on, ‘do I pay my water bill, or do I buy my medications for the month?’”

For the project, Malta received three grants to cover the project to cover all expenses. McGrath said at the federal level, the government contributed around a half a million dollars to relieve the cost. Ultimately, Smith said they were able to save residents from a \$10-15 increase in water costs.

McGrath said with the ongoing water plant project, discussing the job with other Mayors’ Partnership members was helpful to see alternative methods of funding. “The communities are all helping each other,” McGrath said.