

## City gets DBP grant to upgrade financial system

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Photo: Dr. Steven Murray, (second from the left) chairman of the Delta Bridge Project Steering Committee, announced a \$30,000 grant for Helena-West Helena to upgrade the city's accounting and financial systems. Lynn Boone (far left) and Mayor James Valley (center) along with City Clerk Sandi Ramsey (second from the right) and City Treasurer Michael Boone (far right) were on hand to accept the grant. (Photo Submitted)

Dr. Steven Murray, chairman of the Delta Bridge Project Steering Committee, announced \$30,000 in grant funding to the city of Helena-West Helena to consolidate and improve the merged city's accounting and financial systems.

The grant will be used to buy hardware, software, and licensing package, as well as to provide the training, consultation, and ongoing technical assistance needed for city officials to use the new systems. The 2006 merging of the cities of Helena and West Helena was the largest city merger in Arkansas's history. Since merging, Helena-West Helena had been operating with three accounting systems, which created difficulty in managing the city's financial information.

The mayor, city council members, and other elected officials all agreed that it was vital that a standardized accounting system be introduced and that municipal finance personnel were trained in its use.

The proposed accounting package, Red Wing Perception Municipal Accounting and Payroll, was developed by Computer Systems of Arkansas and was recommended by the Arkansas Municipal League. Red Wing Perception will be implemented over the upcoming months.

"The new system will improve the ability of city officials to communicate the status of city finances, will improve oversight by the city council, and reduce misunderstandings on the state of the city's finances," said Mayor James Valley. "With a single, automated system and greater accountability, elected leaders will be able to improve decision making on municipal finances."

“The municipal accounting grant will directly strengthen Helena-West Helena’s capacity to manage the finances of a larger city, to provide accountability to area citizens, to develop and publish financial statements, and to engage in sound fiscal practices,” said Dr. Murray.

The Delta Bridge Project is a comprehensive community development initiative for Phillips County, of which Helena-West Helena is the county seat. The goals of the Delta Bridge Project are outlined in the Phillips County Strategic Community Plan, which was developed by over 300 Phillips County residents during an 18-month strategic planning process. The grant for the new accounting system directly addresses a strategic development goal identified by the community in this document.

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