

City of Carmel

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NEWS RELEASE

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Historic artifact emerges from roundabout construction site



CARMEL, IN – A historic artifact, likely dating back to native American settlements in Hamilton County, has been found at the site of a Carmel roundabout project. A City employee found the object – identified as a banner stone – late in the day Thursday, June 29, near the project site at 136th Street and Gray Road. City officials immediately notified the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, which investigated the incident and deemed it an isolated find that should not hinder the project unless more artifacts are found.

“It is important to preserve our history as we continue to make progress and grow as a community. That is especially true when it comes to respecting the history of our first settlers in Clay Township,” said Mayor Jim Brainard. “That is why we took quick action to assess the incident and contact the proper authorities before proceeding with this project.”

The banner stone was found by Josh Kirsh, an engineering administrator for the City, at the edge of construction, sitting on top of dirt near a silt fence. It appeared to be on top of spoil piles left over when a utility company did preliminary work, which included digging a trench about five-feet deep.

Indiana law requires that no work take place within 100 feet of the location of the find until a proper notification is made to DNR and the incident is investigated for evidence of further historically significant finds. In this case, that meant work could continue, but only in the center of the new roundabout. In addition to DNR, the City Engineer's office also contacted Conner Prairie for assistance.

City Engineer Jeremy Kashman met with a DNR archaeologist at the site on Saturday morning for an inspection of the project area. After searching the area and examining the job site, the archaeologist felt this was an "isolated find" and nothing else needed to be done unless more are found.

"If we should find something else, then we will need to be back in contact with them," said Kashman. "The contractor should be back to work today (Monday) prepping for sub-grade stabilization to take place on Wednesday. With the heavy rains on Friday the crew was not on site Saturday so we were able to avoid delays."

This banner stone could be more than 4,000 years old and is identified as being from the archaic period. Banner stones are thought to have been used for a variety of purposes. They are commonly found in Indiana, Ohio and Michigan. Noted for their centered hole in the middle, the stones are the subject of debate among archaeologists over their purpose. Some suggest they were used as atlatl weights (for throwing spears) or for certain ceremonies. Others have suggested they were used as tools for drilling or fire-making.

The roundabout project at 136th and Gray should be completed by early August.