



Splash pad

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said. The city tried unsuccessfully to obtain grants for the project but then eyed some state money that could be used that wasn't spent on the walking trail looping through the south end of the city, City Manager Randy Frazer said.

He explained that Birch Street will be closed between First and Second streets, joining the park to the old hospital property. The splash pad will be constructed between the two properties.

The park's master plan, unveiled in 2017, envisioned connecting the park and the lot. Ideas for that space included a new library and event center, although those plans were not discussed Tuesday.

The splash pad will be a water-waste pad, he said, meaning the water won't be recirculated and reused but will be drained away.

Annual operating costs are estimated at \$5,000 for maintenance and about \$7,600 for water.

The water will be activated by a button to run for a set amount of time and then shut off. Frazer said the pad will also have provisions for the future addition of play equipment.

"If the funds become available, we can add some different features," he said.

Playground equipment

Commissioners set a public hearing for noon Monday at City Hall to discuss applying for a \$628,728 Community Development Block Grant from the state commerce



Courtesy image

A rendering from the company hired to build a splash pad at Wilson Park.

department to update playground equipment at the north side of the park.

The full cost is estimated at \$785,910, leaving the city responsible for \$157,182. Frazer said the VJ Wilkins fund has pledged \$50,000 if the city gets the CDBG grant. The rest of the city's portion is budgeted.

"Do we have a good shot at this grant?" Commissioner Tweedy asked.

Consultant Rose Mary Saunders, who was at the Tuesday meeting, responded that with the splash pad approved and pickle ball courts coming to the park, there's a good chance.

"I think it will show that the city is being very proactive to establish quality of life for their citizens to enjoy," she said.

The city failed to get a similar grant last year. It incorporated both the splash pad and the playground equipment together, she said.

Xmas Eve holiday

Commissioners also approved making Christmas Eve day a holiday for city employees starting next year.

Human Resource Director Marla McFarland said city employees typically work until

noon on that day and are given the rest of the day off.

Giving them the full day off would benefit them and their families, she added. It would also mirror what county government does.

Water and sewer departments would still be on call. Police, fire and EMS would still work that day.

Purchase amount raised

Commissioners increased the amount a city manager can spend on purchases without commission approval from \$10,000 to \$20,000.

Beeson said the \$10,000 amount was established long enough ago that it does not go that far today.

"A lot of things go over that \$10,000, even if it's just \$11,000," he said. "It goes over a lot now, and then we have to call special meetings to get it approved."

Finance Director Jennifer Waggoner said a lot of the purchases under consideration are general maintenance items.

"If it is a contract or a change order, all change orders go in front of the commission," she added.

which is what prompted me to combine those two buildings in a single line."

He said that provides a more accurate representation of the cost.

The ratios coming out next fall will have a much better picture of the costs per student for each building, he added.

"We'll more readily see some opportunities to review our expenditures and find some potential cost savings," he said.

Arkalalah," Skibbe said.

"Spend it all on Arkalalah, yes," Kanelokes added.

Both both added that a lot of it would to toward food.

"The chicken noodles," Kaneloke said. "That's always my go to."

Skibbe quickly agreed.

"That's always my first stop every year," he said with a laugh.

Flottman

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Flottman's kindness and talent also stood out to his longtime colleague and friend, festival contest director Karen Deal. She worked with him since the early 2000s.

"Rex was one of the most kind and gentle people I have ever known," she said. "He was a great team worker — the kind of person who would do anything for you."

Deal remembered how Rex often stepped in to help her band, Wind, Wood & Wire, when a member couldn't make a performance.

"He very gladly stepped in and did just wonderful," she said. "He loved his music and played several instruments. Everyone loved him — he just had a personality that drew people in. It's hard to replace him. He's going to be greatly missed."

One favorite memory shows Rex as others remember him — relaxed, laughing, surrounded by friends. During the festival, he often worked alongside Larry Junker and Richard Crowson in the Media Trailer. The three created a cartoon caption contest each year, reviewing entries together and joking late into the evening.

"To see Rex, Larry, and Richard sitting around, reading out the contest entries and just joking with each other, was to see Rex in his element," Redford said.

His behind-the-scenes work often carried deep



File photo

Walnut Valley Festival Media Director Rex Flottman, left, also was part of the Walnut Valley String Band.

meaning, especially in moments that tested the community. In 2001, just days after the 9/11 attacks, Rex helped rework the program when many musicians couldn't travel. His handwritten notes in that year's schedule — crossed-out names, new lineups, last-minute changes — tell the story of a man determined to make sure the music didn't stop. Those who came to Winfield that year remember a gathering filled with healing and unity, something Rex quietly helped make possible.

The festival office in downtown Winfield closed Oct. 15 in honor of Flottman. Its Facebook post Oct. 10 announcing his death brought more than 250 comments mourning and remembering him.

Rex changed the direction of my life by asking me to take pictures for the festi-

val in 1992," said Debbie McNinch. "It wasn't just a job, it became a part of my life."

Festival performer Beppe Gambetta said Flottman represented the soul of the festival community.

"He was also a good picker, I treasure the special occasions when we got to pick few notes together with him and I will always be grateful to him for the support he gave to my career," Gambetta said.

Next year, Rex's image will appear beside Stage I — a tradition reserved for those who have played an essential role in the festival's history. It's a fitting tribute for someone whose kindness, energy, and humor touched everyone around him.

For those who knew him, his voice, laughter, and love for the music will always be part of the festival's sound.

Costs

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administrative services.

The annual cost per student for each facility is based on that building's expenses, divided by the number of students attending.

"When enrollment drops, the cost per student tends to increase because those fixed costs are spread across fewer students," he said. "If you look at the largest enrollment districts in Kansas, their cost per pupil is much lower than the

smallest enrollment districts, simply due to economy of scale."

Bressler said costs at the high school run higher because secondary programs include specialized courses such as career and technical education, advanced sciences, arts and athletics.

The schools also have higher staffing ratios and additional facility and equipment needs.

"Many of our shared staff at the high school and middle school, music, arts, etc., were categorized as high school, further inflating those numbers,

Medallion

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which used lyrics from "Rock Around the Clock."

"I did make a comment to him about ... if you see a piece of trash, look inside the piece of trash," Kanelokes said with a laugh. "There have been years where it was hidden in some trash."

She said they found the medallion at the opposite end of the track from where they started. "So we had to walk the whole track looking for it. It was so exciting,"

Skibbe said the medallion was well hidden under the rock.

Asked what they planned to do with the \$500 prize, they both laughed.

"It will probably go to



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Whetstone

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ions. I don't think it was good he got shot," Whetstone told the CT after he was reinstated.

He was reinstated a week after being suspended and returned to teaching, but he resigned his coaching duties. His co-workers threw a goodbye party for him last week.

"Due to all the things that occurred, I did not feel I could be myself anymore at USD 470," he told the CT. "I am sad that I will miss a lot of my daughter's senior

year, but I had to protect my mental health. I will miss the colleagues I worked with over the last 12 or so years."

USD 470 district spokesperson Alisha Call said the

district does not share detail related to personnel matters to respect individual privacy.

"We appreciate Mr.

Whetstone's service and wish him the best," she added.

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