

Standoff at City Hall: Ordinance enforcement spurs protest



Volunteer Rosalyn Jourdan (second from right) hands Shane Baker (left) a bag of snacks in front of Joplin City Hall earlier this month.

GLOBE | JOHN HACKER

BY DEBBY WOODIN
dwoodin@joplinglobe.com

Despite an effort by Joplin officials to encourage volunteer meal providers to move from in front of City Hall and to continue their effort elsewhere following city health guidelines, the group is standing its ground. The volunteers of the effort called “Hopeful Bites” have been serving food to the hungry and those in need from the sidewalk in front of Joplin City Hall since Oct. 15. They said their effort also is a protest of the city ticketing homeless people for pedestrian violations, such as not using crosswalks on city streets, and for camping in city parks or on public land when they have no indoor place to stay.

City Manager Nick Edwards has met with the group several times without being able to move the needle. “We want to continue to try to partner with Hopeful Bites,” Edwards told the Globe. “The work that they’re doing is wonderful. Their effort to feed some of the most vulnerable people (in) our community is really inspiring, and we commend that. We just

hope we can partner and do it in a way that is safe for all involved. So we’ve had a series of conversations,” he said. City officials want the group to obtain a health permit and to learn how to prepare and hold food at proper temperatures. Also, they have asked Hopeful Bites to move to another location to end what they say is congestion at the entrance to City Hall — where there also is a trolley stop — and also to reduce noise there. But Hopeful Bites has stayed put because its members say

they don’t believe the city is being fair to the homeless, who the group says have been targeted by unfair city ordinance enforcement. Several group members spoke to the City Council on Monday night.

COMPOUNDING THE PROBLEM?

Amanda Bearden, a volunteer who helps those who are homeless and who said she is not affiliated with Hopeful Bites or other nonprofits, told the City Council at its meeting Monday

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LIVING HISTORY

Hollcroft Stults building begins new life in downtown Joplin

BY ROGER NOMER
rnomer@joplinglobe.com

The historic downtown Hollcroft Stults building has lived many lives — a livery, a car dealership and a parking garage. Now it’s home to new lofts with a vintage touch.

On the staircase down to the first floor of the building at the southeast corner of Fourth Street and Virginia Avenue, Jennifer Longnecker paused to point out original steel support beams in the wall. She admired rivets about half the size of her hand.

“These are riveted by hand, because that’s how they did it back then,” Longnecker said. “They just don’t do things like this now.”

There’s a lot of history in the Hollcroft Stults Lofts.

The building, owned by Longnecker and her husband, Ryan, features eight units with original wood, steel, brick and tile. An office has been turned into a kitchen, with the sign “Not Responsible for Articles Left in Cars” hanging above the window.

The couple left the original beams in the building open and kept the garage doors. They saved as much of the skylight glass in the former freight elevator as they could and turned that space into a staircase. Vintage hardware is attached to the elevator’s walls — things like gears and wooden ladders remain hanging above the stairs.

A large wooden support system, which Longnecker likens to a bridge’s trestles, runs across the second floor. It was put in place to bear the floor weight while keeping the space open to drive cars through and now runs through the middle of one of the lofts.

In addition to the eight lofts, there’s two smaller ones, kept for owners if they have guests or as rentals for traveling nurses. There’s also a parking garage with 16 spaces.

Longnecker said most of the interior space was wide open from its former use as a garage, which let them be creative with the lofts.



A condo’s kitchen in the Hollcroft Stults Building was converted from an office in the former garage.

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Support beams of the Hollcroft Stults Building have been preserved, running through a condo on the second floor.

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The rooftop deck of the Hollcroft Stults Building offers a view of downtown Joplin.

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“This one was such an open slate because it was an open warehouse basically,” Longnecker said. “We could do so much with it, so that was a big appeal.”

The building housed several modes of transportation, from horse-drawn carriages to cars. It’s on the National Register of Historic

Places as part of a historic downtown district, and it’s one of the oldest buildings downtown.

The front of the building — the Hollcroft — was built in the late 1800s, while the garage side — the Stults — was built in 1914, Longnecker said.

The building started as

Southern Livery Co., owned by Frank Hollcroft. The location one block off Main Street offered ready access to travelers who arrived in Joplin via railroad or streetcar and needed a horse or buggy to reach their destination.

In 1901, a devastating fire broke out in the east side of the stable, taking 23 horses and all the carriages. Hollcroft rebuilt the stables in a new two-story, fireproof building.

In 1916, the Southern Auto Co., a dealer for Paige cars, was formed and stables were remodeled into a modern two-story garage with a car elevator. Later, it served as a downtown parking garage and was also used by Hertz Rental Car company.

Longnecker said the project presented itself to the family as they had been looking at properties downtown. This was a natural fit for them, and the lofts are a way to invest back into the community, she said.

Scott Marshall of Gardner and Marshall Construction LLC handled renovations. Longnecker said none of this would have been possible if it wasn’t for Marshall taking over this project.

“He has been an integral part of this project and has been a tremendous asset in giving the lofts the luxury design and attention to detail that we were going for,” Longnecker said.

The project has taken awhile to complete, part of

SEE **NEW**, 2A

Joplin school district puts \$40M bond issue on April 2026 ballot

BY JOHN HACKER
jhacker@joplinglobe.com

The Joplin Board of Education will seek voter approval in the April election for a \$40 million bond issue to make improvements at a number of older elementary schools, at Joplin High School and at facilities near Junge Field.

The board Tuesday voted unanimously to put the bond issue on the ballot to pay for:

- **ADDITIONS AND INTERIOR AND CLASSROOM RENOVATIONS** at Stapleton and Eastmorland elementary schools.
 - **INTERIOR AND CLASSROOM RENOVATIONS** at Cecil Floyd and Kelsey Norman elementary schools.
 - **CLASSROOM RENOVATIONS** at McKinley, Royal Heights and Jefferson elementary schools.
 - **COMPREHENSIVE WINDOW REPLACEMENT** at Eastmorland, Stapleton, Kelsey Norman and Cecil Floyd elementary schools.
 - **SITE ACCESS**, safety and parking improvements at Eastmorland, Stapleton, Cecil Floyd, McKinley, Jefferson and Royal Heights elementary schools.
 - **AN INDOOR ACTIVITY FACILITY** at Joplin High School to include classroom space for physical education, athletic and activity spaces, storage and community space.
 - **JUNGE CAMPUS IMPROVEMENTS** to include buildings, grounds and a transportation facility remodel; bus lot concrete and parking improvements; and locker room and concession renovations at the stadium.
- The issue will need a 57.1% supermajority to pass in the April 7 election.
- Joplin Superintendent Kerry Sachetta said this is Phase 2 of a plan presented to the board by a long-range facilities planning committee made up of parents, community members, city leaders, business owners and Joplin school district staff.
- This committee visited and evaluated every district campus, school building and storage and maintenance facility, comparing educational suitability, program needs, student demographics, safety and projected student enrollment data.

‘EXTENSIVE REVIEW’

“Over the last couple of years, we’ve done an extensive review of the district’s facilities and a needs assessment of what we need to make sure we have suitable educational facilities all throughout the district,” Sachetta told the board at Tuesday’s regular meeting. “And we made a particular focus on our elementary schools, and that’s a big part of what we’re going to talk about tonight. We’ve also looked at the athletic needs and the structural support needs throughout the district, as well as our support staff to make sure we can adequately continue on with providing the best opportunities for our students.”

Board President Veronica Scheurich said the vote was unanimous and discussion was brief Tuesday because board members had been updated frequently by the facilities planning committee and had considered the final report issued in October.

“The improvements are necessary and our priorities are in line — safety and security of our students, maintaining

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